

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JULIE'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Woolton, Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 107412

Headteacher: Sister Ann Marie Gammack

Reporting inspector: A A Henderson
2941

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th November 2000

Inspection number: 223957

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Speke Road Woolton Liverpool
Postcode:	L25 7TN
Telephone number:	0151 428 6421
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Geraldine Poole
Date of previous inspection:	15 th January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
A A Henderson 2941	Registered inspector		Characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key issues for action
I Adams 13336	Lay inspector	PSHE	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
A Bird 23528	Team inspector	Mathematics	
C Griffin 11508	Team inspector	English Drama Media studies	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
R Woodhouse 22691	Team inspector	Science	
T Davies 8336	Team inspector	Design and technology	
A Bell 20119	Team inspector	Information technology	
T Wright 4411	Team inspector	Art	
R Castle 22590	Team inspector	Geography	
B Downes 19026	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
S Stanley 30128	Team inspector	Music Equal opportunities	
S Jeffray 12985	Team inspector	Physical education Dance English as an additional language	
F Shufflebotham 30427	Team inspector	History Sociology	
A Lagden 28101	Team inspector	Vocational studies Special educational	

		needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Julie's High School is a Roman Catholic comprehensive school for girls aged 11-18. There are 1240 pupils on roll, with 186 students in the sixth form (including a small number of boys). The school is popular and over-subscribed, and numbers have increased by 113 since the previous inspection. Pupils coming into the school include the full range of ability, but the attainment of most pupils is above average. 11.5 per cent of pupils have special educational needs which is below average, as is the proportion with formal statements (1.3 per cent). Fewer than 3 per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and there are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school serves a wide catchment which includes areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. More than a fifth of pupils in the school are eligible for free school meals which is above average. The school is part of the LEA's Excellence in Cities initiative, and is a designated Beacon school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Julie's High School is an effective school where examination results continue to improve. It is providing a good education for its pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, and standards are above average by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, and are average by the end of the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good, and leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has many strong features with some important areas for improvement. It is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Examination results are improving; the proportion of pupils with 5+ GCSE results at grades A*-C is well above average.
- Standards in English are well above average.
- Pupils' attitudes, attendance, behaviour, personal development and relationships are excellent.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Curricular provision in the sixth form, and extra-curricular sport across the school are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

What could be improved

- Curricular balance and provision for design technology and information technology do not meet requirements in Key Stages 3 and 4, and adversely affect pupils' standards and progress.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and subject performance are not systematic enough and require more rigour.
- Planning for development is inconsistent in subjects, as is the use of assessment information to guide teacher planning, review progress and set targets for improvement. Management could be improved in some subjects.
- Learning resources are insufficient in some subjects, and in the libraries.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in 1996, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards are higher. Overall, examination results at all levels have improved year by year. Teaching is now stronger and more consistent, with very little unsatisfactory teaching this time. Attendance has improved significantly from average to well above average, and the very high quality of pupils' attitudes, relationships and personal development has been sustained. In other respects, progress has been uneven in tackling the issues identified in the previous report. The management structure at senior level has been effectively restructured and financial management is now good. The strategic planning for the school has been strengthened, with some progress in monitoring and evaluation, but further improvement is needed to ensure consistency across the school. Some improvements

have been made to the curriculum, but progress here has been insufficient to ensure pupils receive a balanced experience which meets all National Curriculum requirements. Resources for information technology have improved greatly, but work is still needed to provide all pupils with a coherent programme. Despite some improvement, library resources are still insufficient. Standards of health and safety are secure, and equipment in art and drama now meet requirements. Overall, the school has a commitment to, and the capacity, for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	B	C	C	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Overall standards are above average by the age of 14, and pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to the above average attainment of most when they join the school at age 11. Results in the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average overall, and were very high compared with similar schools (that is, for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). English is the strongest of the three core subjects – standards were well above average in English, were above in mathematics, and average in science. Since 1997, results have been improving at a slightly faster rate than the national trend, although science results dipped in 2000. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 3 during the inspection are above average overall, and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Standards are well above average in English, above average in most other subjects, and average in geography and music. In design technology and information technology, standards are not high enough.

In 2000, the average points score for GCSE was above average, and well above average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A*-C grades exceeded the school's targets, and was well above average, and very high compared with similar schools. GCSE results have improved steadily since the previous inspection, although subject results vary considerably. They were very high in English literature and German, and were well above average in English, French, dual award science, business studies and music. Results were above average in mathematics, history, sociology, religious education and biology. However, they were below average in geography, physics, single award science, child development and dance, and were well below national figures in chemistry and classical studies. In all other subjects, results were average. Many subjects improved from their 1999 performances, notably English literature and history, but performance was not as high in mathematics, art, and science. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 4 during the inspection are generally similar to the pattern of examination results, with well above average standards in English and modern foreign languages. The majority of other subjects are above average, with the exception of geography, art, design technology and information technology where standards are below average at this stage. Overall, the standards at Key Stage 4 represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3.

Sixth-form standards are in line with the national average. In 2000, the average points score was close to, but slightly above average. A higher than average proportion of students successfully completed their courses, with around one third gaining the higher grades A or B, which is in line with the national picture. Results were above average in English, sociology, business studies, general studies, GNVQ and also from low entry numbers in German, physical education and music. In work seen during the inspection, standards were generally average and students' achievement was satisfactory. Work was above average in English, information technology, modern foreign languages, music, drama, sociology and GNVQ, and students were achieving well in these subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils enjoy school and are very well motivated to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. The school is a very calm, orderly place, and pupils are courteous and considerate.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Relationships are very good indeed, and the school provides a strong, caring atmosphere where pupils get on very well with each other and with their teachers.
Attendance	Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons, and just four lessons were unsatisfactory. In almost two-thirds of lessons the teaching was good or better, and examples of good teaching feature in all subjects. This consistency of teaching is a strength of the school. Teaching is especially effective in English across the school; in mathematics it is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory elsewhere; in science teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, and is good in the sixth form. Good teaching predominates in physical education, dance, drama, information technology, design technology, sociology and GNVQ. In the sixth form, 77 per cent of teaching is good or better. Pupils respond very positively to the quality of teaching, and their learning needs are generally well met. However, in Key Stages 3 and 4, the impact of otherwise good teaching is reduced by weaknesses in provision for design technology and information technology. A significant strength of teaching is the teachers' good management of pupils, and the positive quality of relationships which effectively promote good learning. There is a general weakness in teaching in Key Stage 3 where pupils are unclear about their learning and relative attainment because teachers make inconsistent use of National Curriculum levels in their assessments. The school's literacy strategy is proving very effective in improving pupils' skills and raising standards. There is no co-ordinated approach to the teaching of numeracy, and development here is satisfactory, but less effective than it could be.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. Statutory requirements for design technology and information technology are not met in Key Stages 3 and 4, and pupils do not have enough time to reach expected standards. Particular strengths are the sixth-form curriculum, and the provision for careers and vocational education. Extra-curricular provision, especially sport, is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and make good progress, with most successfully completing GCSE courses at the end of Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with	Pupils with English as an additional language are not at an early stage of

English as an additional language	language acquisition. Their progress is similar to that of other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This area is a strength of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. The programme for pupils' personal development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for health and safety, together with child protection are satisfactory. The promotion of good behaviour and improved attendance is excellent. Arrangements for assessing pupils' academic performance are satisfactory, although information is not well used to guide teacher planning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher is providing strong leadership, supported by the senior management team, and there is clear educational direction and focus on improvement. The pastoral system is well managed, but there is inconsistency in subject management, for example, in science, mathematics and art.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is conscientious and strongly committed to the school's well-being. They work closely with the headteacher, and monitor standards and finance effectively. Not all statutory requirements are in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's strategic planning has been strengthened. Senior staff are clear about the school's performance compared with other schools, but the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and subject performance is not systematic enough, and requires more rigour.
The strategic use of resources	The school applies well to the principles of best value and achieves good value for money. Staffing and accommodation are adequate. Funding for learning resources has recently improved, but there are historic shortages in some subjects. The library is under-resourced.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Children are making good progress in both academic and personal development. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good, and pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is approachable. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for parents about progress. • The partnership between school and parents. • The amount of homework set. • More extra-curricular activities.

The vast majority of parents have positive views on most aspects of the school. Inspectors agree with these positive views, and disagree with concerns about homework, which is used well to support learning. In other respects, the school acknowledges the continued need to strengthen its partnership with parents. Inspectors agree that information about pupils' progress could be improved, for example, by increased use of National Curriculum levels when reporting to parents. The newly introduced Key Stage 3 review day is a considerable improvement in this process also. The extra-curricular provision is extensive, and inspectors disagree with

parents who have concerns here. Many pupils take part in a very strong programme of sporting activities, and the opportunities also include drama, dance and musical activities. Inspectors acknowledge that some curricular areas could contribute more to the otherwise good provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are above average. Results of national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 have been incomplete until this year when, for 2000, they show that the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in English is well above average, in mathematics is above average, and in science is average. Overall, the average points score for these pupils is above average. With the exception of reading tests applied by the school in Year 7, there is no other standardised data available to compare each cohort on entry. Using the reading age data, the school's profile for the pupils currently in Key Stages 3 and 4 is broadly similar, although analysis of the incomplete Key Stage 2 national test data for 1999 suggests that the current Year 8 were average on entry to the school, rather than above average.

2. In 2000, the school's results in national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average overall, and were very high when compared with similar schools (that is, schools having a similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals). Since 1997, the school's performance at Key Stage 3 has been well above average, with results that have been above the national trend. In 2000, performance in English has been sustained and is well above average, whilst results in mathematics have continued to be above average. The results in science dipped from above average to average in 2000. When compared with the results of similar schools in 2000, performance in all three subjects is very high.

3. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in five or more subjects was well above the national average, and very high compared with similar schools. The proportion gaining five or more passes at A*-G was close to, but above the national average, and well above average for similar schools. The school's average points score for GCSE in 2000 was also above average and well above that of similar schools. There has been steady improvement each year since the previous inspection in all three benchmarks.

4. GCSE results in 2000, in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades, show considerable variation between subjects. Results for English literature and German were very high, whilst those for English, dual award science, French, business studies and music were well above the national average. Results in history, biology, sociology, religious education and mathematics were above the national average, whilst both art and drama were in line. Results in geography, child development, physics, dance and single award science were below average, and for both chemistry and classical studies results were well below the national figures. Many subjects improved from their 1999 results at GCSE, notably English literature and history, but performance was not as high in mathematics, biology, chemistry, art, child development, sociology and single award science.

5. In the sixth form, since the previous inspection the average points score of students taking two or more A-levels has generally reflected the national average. In 2000, the average points score is close to, but above the national figure. The overall pass rate shows improvement in 2000, with an above average 95.6 per cent of students successfully completing their courses. In almost all subjects, all students achieve a pass grade, with the exception of art, geography and mathematics where results are below the national average. Just over 35 per cent of passes were at the higher grades A and B which is in line with the national average, with above average success in English, business studies, general studies and sociology, and also from relatively low entry numbers in German, physical education and music. Statistical comparisons can be unreliable where small entry numbers are involved. However, biology, chemistry, physics, economics, mathematics and art all gained a below average proportion of the higher grades, as well as a drop in their 1999 performance. From healthier numbers, geography dipped to below average for the higher grades, whilst history improved to match the national proportion in 2000. Results for the advanced GNVQ subjects were above the national average in 1999 and have been sustained at this level in 2000.

6. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards are above average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. It is well above average in English, and is above average in mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages, art and physical education. Attainment is average in geography and music, and is below average in both design technology and information technology. By the end of Key Stage 4

attainment continues to be above average. Attainment in modern foreign languages improves to well above average, whilst English continues to maintain high standards. Elsewhere, attainment is above average still in mathematics, science and physical education. At this stage, attainment in music, drama and sociology is also above average, and is average in history. Attainment in geography and art are below average by the end of Key Stage 4, whilst standards in design technology and information technology are still below average. By the end of the sixth form, attainment overall is average. It is well above average in sociology, and above average in English, drama, modern foreign languages, music and GNVQ courses. In all other subjects, attainment in the sixth form is average.

7. The school has set appropriate overall targets for the attainment of pupils at GCSE, based on predictions for each pupil using data which links their prior attainment and Key Stage 3 results with GCSE expectations. The use of this data is a new process which is inconsistently used by subjects at present, and requires further development and consolidation to ensure improvement. The planned introduction of the use of data on GCSE attainment for predicting A-level success will not only help the school set appropriate targets for students, but also enable results to be analysed and accurate judgements made concerning added value and achievement of student potential.

8. Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory as they move through the school. This mainly secure progress is generated by excellent pupil attitudes, their good learning skills, and the generally good teaching across the school. However, these positive features are adversely affected by curriculum weaknesses in Key Stages 3 and 4 that restrict pupils' attainment and progress, notably in design technology and information technology.

9. In Key Stage 3, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. They achieve well in English, geography, modern foreign languages, art and physical education, mainly in response to good teaching. Pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory in all other subjects, except in design technology and information technology where weaknesses in curriculum planning and National Curriculum coverage result in unsatisfactory achievement. In Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement continues to be satisfactory overall. It remains good in English, modern foreign languages and physical education. At this stage, progress and achievement improve in music as a result of stronger teaching and pupils' commitment to the examination course. Achievement is also good in drama and sociology for similar reasons. It is generally satisfactory elsewhere. However, the impact of the weaknesses at Key Stage 3 in design technology and information technology continue to affect progress in these subjects, and pupils' achievement, notwithstanding the generally good teaching in both areas, is unsatisfactory. Students' achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, and is founded on their very strong levels of commitment and enthusiasm in response to good teaching and well planned curricular provision. Their progress and achievement are good in English, drama, information technology, modern foreign languages, the humanities subjects, music and physical education, and are satisfactory in all other subjects.

Standards in literacy and numeracy

10. Pupils enter the school with above average results in the end of Year 6 national tests in English. However, their results for writing are not as high as reading. Good teaching, supported by a whole school literacy policy, and the pupils' positive attitudes help them make good progress as they move through the school. Most pupils read fluently and with well above average comprehension skills. They can locate information quickly. Their writing skills are well above average with high standards of accuracy. They communicate their understanding and knowledge with clarity. The well above average standards reached in English are consistently shown across all subjects.

11. Basic numerical knowledge and skills are good, but are not developed to maximum effect across the school. There is a policy for numeracy both in mathematics and across the school, but this is not fully implemented. Pupils exercise measurement and graphical skills in some subjects, for example, in geography, information technology, science and history, but there is no co-ordinated cross curricular approach which would extend and develop pupils' skills further.

12. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their mainstream peers. They achieve well in special educational needs groups and make good progress in mainstream classes. This enables most of them to complete successfully GCSE courses at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils identified as being gifted and talented make good progress.

13. The small number of pupils from homes where English is an additional language do not have significantly lower language proficiency than other pupils. They feel well supported in the school, and make good progress alongside their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' positive attitudes noted at the last inspection are still very much in evidence today, and are an outstanding strength of the school. Over 94 per cent of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their children liked coming to school, and that the school is helping their child become mature and responsible. Inspection findings confirm this. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are quickly and positively involved in a wide range of activities. At the start of sessions there is a settled, purposeful atmosphere, whilst registration is carried out in an effective way displaying good relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils respond eagerly to questions and to any opportunity for independent learning. The success which pupils with special educational needs achieve enhances their attitudes and expectations. They work enthusiastically and co-operatively and their behaviour enables them to respond well to the opportunities offered by the school, including the extra help given by learning support assistants and others. This was noted in a Year 9 history lesson where a profoundly deaf pupil made good progress with additional support.

15. Pupils' behaviour is excellent in and around the school, especially considering the size of the total school population and the constraints of the site. In lessons, pupils work constructively and co-operatively in groups, and productively on their own. Trained pupils organise the *Peer Counselling Programme* for any pupils with concerns over bullying. This has successfully run for some years, and has been the subject of presentations by pupil counsellors to other organisations for training purposes. The good standard of care and high level of expectation shown by adults fosters a courteous and purposeful community and has contributed to a reduction in the rate of exclusions since the last inspection. In the last year there were two permanent and 25 temporary exclusions which are in line with national figures.

16. The personal development of the pupils is very good. They have excellent relationships with fellow pupils and adults. Sixth-form students are encouraged to contribute to the school community through special projects such as the paired reading scheme with younger pupils. The strong pastoral care system promotes school values and monitors pupils' personal development through the use, for example, of learning mentors who check on pupils' progress towards set targets. The sixth form elect their own council who undertake duties at formal occasions and who represent the views of pupils on a range of issues. Assemblies are a valuable weekly opportunity for the whole year group to meet and exchange information and often are used to develop pupils' presentation skills and confidence.

17. The most recent attendance figures for the school show a further improvement from the time of the last inspection to around 97 per cent which is well above the national average. The continued emphasis and effective procedures for quickly highlighting absences are contributing to the excellent levels of attendance – for example, 93 pupils achieved 100 per cent attendance certificates in the last academic year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In both Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching is good or better in 60 per cent of lessons, and virtually all of the remaining teaching is satisfactory. In the sixth form 77 per cent of teaching is at least good, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen at this stage. One lesson in six is very good spread across the key stages, predominantly in English, drama, dance, physical education and information technology. Since the previous inspection there has been improvement in the overall quality of teaching in most subjects. Positive standards have been consolidated within subjects, and the overall proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced to just two per cent. The high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3 in mathematics has been eliminated.

19. Teaching is notably effective throughout the school in English, drama, dance and physical education. Another area of significant strength in teaching is information technology, whilst good teaching predominates in design technology at Key Stages 3 and 4. It is also good in art and geography at Key Stage 3, and in mathematics at Key Stage 4. Teaching in sociology is good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where teaching is also good in modern foreign languages, history, geography, GNVQ and science. No subject is

judged to have unsatisfactory teaching overall, and examples of good teaching feature in all subjects. However, the effectiveness and impact of teaching in both information technology and design technology are weakened by the curriculum arrangements and provision in Key Stages 3 and 4. The very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching arose in mathematics in Key Stage 3 where the work was not well matched to ensure pupils' learning, and in modern foreign languages in both Key Stages 3 and 4 where the pace was too slow, and the work lacked appropriate challenge.

20. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are strong generally. Where expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high there is positive impact on their rate of progress and attainment. This is notably the case in English, drama and many of the sixth form subjects where pupils and students are required to tackle demanding texts and activities. This is not the case, however, in history, geography, science, art and mathematics where some lessons are over-directed by teachers and provide too little challenge or opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for their learning.

21. Teachers generally explain to pupils what they are expected to learn. In the better lessons, for example, in English, physical education, sociology, economics, GNVQ and information technology, good lesson summaries review progress and understanding. Teachers use a reasonable range of teaching strategies that are generally appropriate for the task in hand, and for the pupils concerned. Collaborative work features strongly in drama, dance, physical education and in some lessons in design technology, modern foreign languages and English. However, the use and application of information technology is a weakness in nearly all subjects. This, together with some over-direction by teachers restricts pupils' opportunities for their development in the important skills of independent research, enquiry and co-operative production in Key Stages 3 and 4.

22. Teachers are effectively developing pupils' key skills of literacy and numeracy. The school's literacy strategy is proving very successful. Teachers generally promote specialist vocabulary in their subjects well, although the development of reading and writing is more uneven, whilst satisfactory overall. Pupils' literacy skills are above average and support their attainment in subjects well. Numeracy skills are also above average, with effective use and development by teachers in some subjects, particularly science, geography, design technology and information technology. Mental and estimating skills are not widely promoted across the school.

23. Most lessons proceed at a purposeful pace with effective questioning which tests pupils' knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. This approach was notably successful in a Year 10 GCSE physical education lesson on the skeletal system, and in a Year 11 English lesson exploring the imagery of war through poetry. However, the pace of some lessons, for example, in modern foreign languages and geography, is slow and limits the rate of pupils' learning.

24. Teachers' planning is generally good, and tasks are usually matched well to the needs and capabilities of a majority of pupils in most subjects, although there is need to continue to ensure that the most able are fully stretched in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils have good learning skills, and work hard, making good gains in skills and knowledge at each key stage. On occasion, for example, in mathematics, geography and history, work focuses on process or knowledge at the expense of conceptual development and understanding. In art, at Key Stage 4, the tasks set are often too prescribed and restrict pupils' originality.

25. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but do not always provide pupils with a clear understanding of their learning and relative attainment, particularly in Key Stage 3, because subjects make inconsistent use of National Curriculum levels in their marking. Homework is used effectively in most subjects to supplement classwork and extend learning. Marking is generally diligent and supportive, but there are weaknesses in science and mathematics. With the exception of the sixth form, teachers' comments in most subjects do not guide pupils sufficiently towards improvement.

26. The management of pupils in the classroom is a significant strength of the school. Teachers are good role models and relate well to pupils, providing a high level of individual support and encouragement. They take very good care of pupils and relationships are particularly good. Many teachers are good listeners who treat all pupils with equal respect. As a result, the school is notably free from tension, and has a positive atmosphere of trust and consideration in which pupils are able to thrive in their learning and personal development. This particular ethos, together with the good teaching, successfully promotes good learning. Pupils respond well to

the expectations of them, and work hard in class, concentrating very well on their work and making very good intellectual and creative effort.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Lessons are well planned and show a good grasp of pupils' needs. In information technology, for example, a Year 9 pupil has an individual learning programme together with support from a technician. In special needs lessons, teachers bring important expertise to the department. Good classroom management skills create a good learning environment in which pupils respond to teachers' high expectations of their work and behaviour. Whilst the department is currently modifying individual education plans, the existing ones are not helpful to teachers; they do not indicate the specific needs of individual pupils in detail and are not used consistently across departments.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

28. The overall quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory, but there are statutory weaknesses and some unsatisfactory features to the balance of the curriculum in Years 7-9 and 10-11.

29. The sixth form curriculum is very good as is the overall provision made for careers and vocational education. Other strengths are the school's provision for gifted and talented pupils, its development of literacy skills, its extra-curricular programme, and the contribution made by other institutions to the pupils' learning.

30. These strengths are offset by some unsatisfactory features. The taught timetable time is still below the minimum recommended time for Key Stage 4, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. There are shortcomings in the overall balance of the curriculum in Years 7-9 and 10-11 and the school does not meet its statutory requirements in its arrangements for design technology and information technology.

31. During Key Stage 3 pupils follow the National Curriculum subjects, and dance and drama during Years 7-8. In Year 9 they can take a second modern foreign language. The time allocated to design technology is insufficient to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study. As a result, standards are not as high as they should be, because despite effective teaching the pupils do not have enough time to reach the expected standards. The system of rotating the different subjects in design technology disrupts the pupils' continuity of learning and so also lowers standards. There are similar weaknesses in the arrangements for information technology. There is not enough time allocated and the range of modules covered is not sufficient to meet statutory requirements. The overall contribution to developing the pupils' information technology skills by individual subjects is also insufficient.

32. The provision for Years 10-11 is also a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. In addition to National Curriculum requirements there is a good range of additional subjects such as drama, dance, a second modern foreign language, sociology and child development. There are twilight courses in GCSE Latin. There is a range of alternative accreditation to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils. There is a vocational course in office practice and GNVQ courses are planned for September, 2001.

33. The weaknesses in design technology for Years 7-9 have consequences for Years 10-11. The time allocation is at the minimum. Normally the pupils might achieve a short course GCSE pass within this low allocation but their standards on entering Year 10 are too low to do this because of the weaknesses in provision in Key Stage 3. Those pupils who take GCSE information technology have full coverage of the requirements but the provision for all pupils is not assured and it is not mapped out across different subjects. In science a small number of pupils spend 30 per cent of their time taking separate sciences but this imbalance is not warranted by the subsequent take up of the subjects at A-level, especially in chemistry. Of the remaining pupils, not enough take double award science.

34. The very good provision in the sixth form is a strength of the school and reflects the determination to provide a wide ranging curriculum that matches all attainments. It comprises 21 subjects at A or AS level. There are also advanced GNVQ courses in health and social care, travel and tourism, and information technology, plus intermediate level courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism. Students can also take a number of GCSE courses. The provision is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

35. Since the previous inspection the school has set up a group to guide the development of literacy skills. This has led to improvements in the provision for research skills in Year 7 personal and social education, a half termly lesson when everyone – including teaching and non teaching staff - reads, and a school policy for marking spelling. The issue of literacy is given a high profile through audits of what takes place in subjects and questionnaires to help decide subsequent developments. The whole school literacy policy provides good guidance for departments but not every subject has developed its own policy, so provision is uneven.

36. The pupils benefit from the school's extensive extra-curricular programme. Sport and team games are very popular and well catered for with about 30 per cent of the girls taking part in these activities. The annual Christmas production also involves many pupils. Those taking drama have the chance to perform for other schools in the community such as a nearby special school. English and drama provide good cultural opportunities through visits to theatres and other sites of literary interest such as the Bronte's parsonage in Haworth. Other activities include music, singing, and dance. The majority of subjects offer GCSE booster classes. A wide range of opportunities for the gifted and talented pupils of all ages are available in all curriculum areas through the network established across the city. These include University summer schools, and are supporting these pupils well in their studies.

37. All pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum. The special educational needs department makes satisfactory provision for pupils on the special educational needs register. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs meets the needs of their statements and these are monitored and reviewed according to requirements. Pupils benefit from appropriate support from external agencies as well as the school.

38. The school has a clear policy and a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Staff are aware of strategies which promote both development and monitoring processes. Each department has a copy of the school policy. The provision for equal access to opportunity for pupils is satisfactory. Opportunities are particularly good in physical education, where staff provide good role models and outside teachers are invited into school for specific courses. In modern foreign languages there is good monitoring of progress and pupils know their levels of achievement and targets for improvement. Pupils have access to a full range of opportunities for achievement which the school provides. The curriculum is broad, although balance is an issue in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons. These pupils are uninhibited and contribute equally with other pupils. Pupils are encouraged to widen their horizons when thinking of careers. Positive role models are invited into school who help to dispel any stereotype ideas the pupils might have. In most subjects, the school monitors pupils' achievements by attainment and background. Attendance and exclusions are monitored by a senior member of staff.

39. The provision made for personal, social and health education (PSHE) overall is satisfactory. The Year 7 programme is taught by form tutors, and a good lesson on bullying strategies was seen during inspection week. The school is working harder to offer a fuller programme which complements its teaching on religious education. Good use is made of external agencies and visiting speakers, such as members of L'Arche community who spoke powerfully to the whole Year 7 group during the inspection week. However, the school now needs to ensure that monitoring for the whole PSHE programme is introduced. By the end of Year 10, pupils use the school's *Focus Week* as part of their preparation for the two week work experience at the beginning of the following term. This is a valuable opportunity which builds on the good links established with the local community. It involves the whole school with help from parents and prepares pupils well for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

40. The provision for careers education and guidance is very good. A coherent and well planned programme for pupils in Years 9 to 11 and students in the sixth form is provided in form tutor periods with very good support from the careers education and guidance co-ordinator and careers advisers. The partnership agreement with the careers provider shows clearly how both partners collaborate to ensure that all pupils and students receive very good and appropriate advice and guidance. Pupils are given the opportunity to record the development of their careers related skills, and there is an up-to-date careers library with appropriate resources and information technology programmes. Careers education and guidance is further enhanced by a well-planned and carefully monitored work experience programme and the annual *Focus Week* for Year 10 pupils which features a series of industrial workshops.

41. The school is providing very well for the personal development of its pupils. However, there is no formal overview of its provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and more needs to be done to raise staff awareness of the opportunities for subjects to contribute towards its delivery.

42. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual development of its pupils. The aims and principles of the Roman Catholic Church permeate the life of the school and underpin the school's behaviour policy. A chaplain supports the religious life of the school and weekly mass is celebrated. All pupils receive religious education lessons and there is a daily act of worship, either as a year group of pupils or as a tutor group. Pupils respond well to opportunities for reflection and a good example was observed during a Year 11 English lesson when the teacher provided time for them to consider their own reactions to the poem studied. In music pupils are encouraged to consider their feelings when listening to music and to reflect upon the mood that is created. In other areas of the school, however, opportunities for reflection and wonder are missed. The Year 7 school block that houses the religious education department is a good example of display used to inspire and encourage reflection, but this is less developed in other areas of the school.

43. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of its pupils. There is a clear code of conduct supported by a well-understood system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils respond to requests for help and sixth-form students co-ordinate the school's charity fund-raising efforts. Contemporary moral issues are discussed during form periods and as part of the senior school religious education programme. Year 8 pupils gain much from the day spent with Liverpool's 'Customs and Excise' where they consider the issues surrounding the abuse of drugs through discussion, drama and role-play.

44. The school makes very good provision for the social development of the pupils. The ethos of the school encourages mutual respect and consideration. The activity week at the end of the summer term provides opportunities for residential experience, overseas experience and encourages group collaboration. In physical education, in particular, pupils are provided with opportunities to work together with an emphasis on team activities, and a third of the pupils take part in extra-curricular sport. The school's peer counselling team of trained pupil counsellors provides excellent opportunities for pupils to support each other and to take responsibility for the welfare of others.

45. The provision for the cultural development of the pupils is less well developed. Satisfactory provision is made across the school. In drama, good provision is found in the opportunities for theatre visits and there are good links with local theatre companies. The annual school production involves a wide range of pupils and they perform to parents and also a local special school. In physical education, dance enriches pupils' cultural experience, whilst in music pupils take part in choirs and music groups. In art and in food technology pupils are provided with the opportunity to investigate the flavour of different cultures in their food and design. Experience of life in a different country is provided in modern foreign languages and during the activity week at the end of term, although better use of the locality could be made in geography, and of visits to galleries in art. Outside the demands of the syllabus there is little opportunity for pupils to become aware of the rich diversity of cultures in Great Britain today.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. Good quality care is provided for all pupils who feel happy and secure, and enjoy coming into this well located large school, most of whom arrive by bus. Teachers know individual pupils very well, and by their good example and high expectations, respond to them in a positive and supportive way. The school's behaviour policy is implemented with a high degree of consistency, and the pervading Catholic Christian ethos of the school results in the promotion of excellent behaviour and attitudes.

47. The special educational needs department show a good level of care and concern for the needs of individual pupils. The procedures for placing pupils on the special educational needs register are applied consistently and all pupils with full statements are reviewed annually with parents, carers and outside agencies.

48. There are well-established and effective procedures for lunchtime supervision: a fall requiring a hospital check was particularly well handled. Sufficient staff, qualified in first-aid, are on hand to cope with such situations. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' health and safety are satisfactory. Regular maintenance and risk assessment audits are carried out jointly by the deputy head and the responsible member of the governing body. However, during the inspection, four potential hazards were brought to the attention of the school. The

experienced nominated staff member for child protection has attended relevant training courses. Procedures reflect local guidelines that ensure all staff, especially new and temporary teachers, are consistent in their approach.

49. Procedures for acknowledging and celebrating individual achievement are very effective at, for example, the weekly year-group assembly. At this time pupils are presented with certificates in recognition of good work or an action inside or outside school, for example, national cross-country running success, and this very effectively encourages pupils to achieve more.

50. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are excellent. Registers are completed efficiently before their prompt return to the school office.

51. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The school has made some significant, albeit recent progress in developing its procedures in this area. The development of a common assessment, recording and reporting policy that was introduced this year has tackled the issue raised in the last report. Its recent introduction, however, means that the process has not yet been successfully embedded in practice across the school. The process and procedures outlined in the policy are sound, and provide clear guidance for teachers based upon recognised good practice. The school is taking steps to review the policy and ensure its adoption by teachers. Good procedures include the close links of the assessment process to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades which give pupils, parents and teachers a clear indication of performance and progress against national benchmarks. Good examples of the assessment process are seen in English, where detailed and regular assessment gives pupils clear indications about what they need to do to improve. Along with the strategies used in drama and modern foreign languages, this good practice provides a model that would benefit other curriculum areas. Procedures used in other subject areas are satisfactory, with the exception of those in information technology and art which require further development.

52. The use of assessment information to guide teacher planning is currently unsatisfactory. The school has provided training for all teachers on the use of assessment data in predicting expected performance and setting appropriate targets for groups and individuals. This is, however, a recent initiative and requires further consolidation to inform ongoing teaching and learning. Changes to the school's computer systems are underway to further improve the storage, retrieval and analysis of assessment information. This, along with further training for key staff and subject managers is necessary before the strategies of effective data analysis are of real benefit in raising standards of achievement. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. Reviews of the quality of information to parents via annual reports and the introduction of additional strategies to identify and monitor 'causes for concern' have been largely successful. The school makes good efforts to involve and inform parents through the introduction of twice-yearly interim reports, target-setting and a review day.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. The school has a range of productive and consistent links with parents and carers that help pupils to learn. These extend from taking training runs for cross-country competitions to involvement in the school's annual *Focus Week*.

54. The pre-inspection questionnaire summary (based on 25 per cent of parents) and meeting indicate that the majority of parents are pleased with most aspects of the school, in particular, the attitudes and values promoted; the pupils' progress; expectations of the pupils; behaviour; teaching; the promotion of maturity and responsibility, and the leadership and management of the school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are generally satisfied with the school's provision for their children.

55. Parents find the spring term consultation evening with teachers valuable, when 100 per cent attendance is usual. The new style *Review Day* introduced for pupils in Years 7 – 9 was evaluated by the school, parents and pupils this year, and found to be more effective than the previous arrangement. They are pleased with the discussions about individual targets for learning, which are recorded in pupil 'planners.' These comprehensive and recently revised homework diaries are the main channel for individual pupil communication and are found to be very useful by parents. Reports, although informative, and thorough, have not included National Curriculum levels when describing pupils' attainment. The recent policy development for assessment and reporting will

strengthen this aspect. The prospectus welcomes parental interest and involvement, and this is fostered by an 'open door' policy by the headteacher for any concerns. Home school agreements signed on the induction day and homework policies are well established. The active parent teacher association meets monthly and raises valuable sums of money to support the school for specific targets such as new drama hall curtains. In these ways, links with parents contribute well to pupils' learning at school and home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, with some considerable strengths together with important areas for improvement. The school has a very strong ethos and a clear sense of purpose founded in its mission statement. This foundation is evident in its documentation and is strongly reflected in the daily life of the school. Pupils, parents, staff and governors are in no doubt about the determination to sustain and improve high standards of personal development and attainment. The high expectations of effort and behaviour are secure within a framework of excellent relationships and discipline, and have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and response to the school.

57. The effectiveness of management has improved since the previous inspection. The governing body is conscientious and strongly committed to the school's well-being. They now have a much clearer awareness of the range of their responsibilities, and fulfil most of them well. Links with the headteacher and senior management team are strong and productive. Through a well defined committee structure and an appropriate programme of meetings, governors are now kept well informed and provide good support to the school. They mainly monitor the work of the school effectively, receiving regular reports on the quality of education, for example, through the bi-annual subject reviews. They now effectively monitor the school's finances, are involved in its strategic planning, and understand where improvements are needed. Governors fulfil most of their statutory duties well, including setting challenging targets for the headteacher and for the school's examination performance. However, despite some improvements, the statutory requirements for design technology and information technology are not met, and insufficient progress has been made in tackling these weaknesses identified in the previous report.

58. The leadership of the headteacher is very strong. She has high expectations of pupils and staff, and her unswerving vision and ambition for the school is strongly endorsed by governors, and supported by the senior management team and the majority of staff. The headteacher is supported well by a loyal, hardworking senior team whose skills and expertise are deployed effectively, and together they are guiding the school towards improved attainment. However, despite regular review of test and examination results, the school is not yet making sufficient use of available data on pupils' prior attainment to plan effective work and set targets for improvement. The recently established line management structure should focus sharply on review and evaluation by the senior management, and enable the school to develop its strengths and target areas for support and improvement within and across subjects.

59. Subject leadership and management is very good in GNVQ, and is good in English and physical education. Most other subjects are soundly organised and administered, although there are management shortcomings in science, mathematics and art. Heads of subjects are mainly effective, although for most their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are not yet well developed. As a result, in a majority of departments, there is insufficient discussion about teaching skills and how pupils learn to promote improvements in teaching and how to raise standards. Strategies such as the regular scrutiny of books and marking by heads of department, or their observation and review of lessons are not consistently in evidence. Planning for development is inconsistent across some subjects, as is the use of assessment and data on pupils' prior attainment in reviewing progress and setting targets. This uneven pattern of management responsibility is a weakness which requires greater emphasis in the roles of both subject heads and senior management.

60. Since the previous inspection, the school's strategic planning has been strengthened, and most issues identified in the last report have been tackled, although there is still room for improvement and consolidation. The senior management team has been successfully improved, and financial management is now strong. Curriculum improvements have taken place, but concerns remain, particularly about balance in Key Stage 4, and statutory provision in design technology and information technology. Resources for information technology have been greatly improved, and there has been some improvement in library provision. The monitoring and evaluation procedures across the school require greater emphasis to ensure coherent and consistent practice, and to build on the steadily improving academic results. The school has the capacity for further improvement.

A rigorous approach by senior management and subject leaders ensuring accountability and collective responsibility for the implementation of agreed policies and practices, including the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, will accelerate this improvement.

61. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and support staff are mainly well matched to the demands of the curriculum. The school has a core of teachers with over twenty years experience much of which has been in this school.

62. There is an appropriate number of classroom support staff; they are effectively deployed and give good support. Teachers receive good support from technical staff, although in design technology part-time technicians are barely adequate to meet the needs. However, recent technician appointments in information technology have ensured that this area now receives good support. The administrative staff ensure the day-to-day efficient smooth running of the school, and support the headteacher and senior management very well.

63. There is a comprehensive induction programme for newly qualified teachers. They are well supported and appreciate the help and guidance that they receive. Good use is made of the LEA's induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Staff who are new to the school have a school mentor in order to ensure they settle quickly and effectively in to the school.

64. There are suitable administrative procedures, but the overall arrangements for the professional development of teachers and staff are not secure, and the impact across departments is varied. There is no clear responsibility for staff development to ensure that school, department and individual training needs are met. As a result, there has been no monitoring of the effect of staff development that has taken place. The school does not have a coherent programme that effectively links the professional development of staff with school and department priorities. Appraisal has been dormant for several years and is now being replaced by performance management. The school has made a start on performance management. Senior teachers and heads of department have attended two-day performance management training in order to appraise staff. Consequently performance management will be able to proceed in 2001.

65. Significant improvements have been made in the accommodation since the last inspection. The new reception area makes an attractive entrance to the school, and an effective security system is now in place. Improvement of the pupils' toilets and the provision of a Year 11 common room have also enhanced the pupils' quality of life in school. A programme of refurbishment has been set in motion that has gone some way to improving the deficiencies highlighted in the previous inspection. Improvement in the facilities for design technology, English, information technology and geography have also had a positive effect on the quality of pupils' learning. However, standards of repair and maintenance are still variable, and some parts of the school are in a poor state of decoration. In particular, the modern foreign languages, history, music and science teaching areas are in need of redecoration and refurbishment to improve the learning environment. The accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum in the majority of subject areas. However, the provision for physical education, music and history is less than satisfactory. The use of dining areas, and off-site accommodation, for teaching dance and aerobics is particularly unsatisfactory, as is the need to use classrooms as changing rooms. Although the number of classrooms is adequate, overcrowding is an ongoing problem as many of the rooms are small. Wheelchair access to the buildings is limited to the ground floor. The school now has an asset management plan, drawn up by the governors' premises committee in consultation with the LEA, which identifies work to be done and the school's long-term priorities. The school is doing as much as can be expected to overcome the inherent problems of the accommodation.

66. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. The co-ordinator has a good working relationship with subjects through the meetings with link representatives, and with members of the governing body. The provision for pupils with special education needs could be improved by reviewing the structure and use of the individual education plans, ensuring that the special educational needs co-ordinator can monitor the work being done across the school and further strengthening links with subject teachers and departments.

67. Overall, learning resources are unsatisfactory and do not offer effective support for the whole school curriculum. Many departments are adequately resourced, although provision of textbooks in history and materials in design technology are unsatisfactory. In science, there are deficiencies in both large and small items of equipment, for example, vacuum pumps, balances and specialist glassware, which constrains

attainment. Whilst computer provision has improved and the ratio of pupils to computers is now 10:1, it is still below the national average of 6:1. Although there has been a significant improvement in provision, access to information technology for subjects is still a problem and inhibits learning. Improvements have been made in both libraries and, in particular, their administration since the last inspection. The level of book stock is in line with national recommendations, but many of the books are old and as a consequence pupils make limited use of both libraries. Significant financial investment is required to address this deficiency. The shortcomings in both the library and information technology impact upon the whole school curriculum and restrict progress, particularly in pupils' development in skills of research and inquiry.

68. Following the 1996 inspection report, the headteacher and the governing body took immediate and appropriate action to investigate the 'inadequacy and inaccuracy of financial management information'. The result was that the school had to go through a period of considerable stringency in order to correct a serious deficit in its finances. It is of great credit to the headteacher and the governors and their determined management that the school budget now has a small reserve fund, and a projected underspend for the end of this financial year. Forecasts for the future indicate that there will be more financial flexibility for the school to tackle its priorities, many of which have been put on hold.

69. The extent to which the school's educational priorities are supported through its financial planning is satisfactory. At the whole school level, lengthy discussions have been held by senior staff and governors in order to identify school priorities, and to encapsulate these in the school development plan; this includes timescales and the costs of implementation. School priorities for action are therefore clearly known, and well publicised. However, a number of departments in the school have yet to include these school priorities in their own development plans in order to ensure consistency of practice across the school. A number of departmental plans are inadequate and lack precise details about the actions that the heads of department intend to take in order to bring about improvement. In particular, there is insufficient information in these plans about the monitoring of the work of the department to ensure it complies with school policies and priorities.

70. The school's annual budget is prepared in draft by the finance committee, and presented to the full governing body for ratification. The school budget is effectively administered by the bursar using a modern computer system. There is an appropriate limit to the level of delegation to the headteacher, thus retaining the governors' responsibility for ultimate control of the budget. While the headteacher is provided with a regular monthly statement of accounts in order to monitor expenditure against budget, the chair of the finance committee receives less regular statements, and generally only in preparation for the termly committee meeting. Coupled with delayed information about the school's salary commitments (the largest part of the school budget), this makes accurate and up-to-date budget monitoring by the finance committee extremely difficult. Moreover, the monitoring statements do not include current expenditure against each budget heading. The recommendations of the 1999 auditor's report have mostly been implemented, but the school has yet to complete an inventory of its assets. An audit of school voluntary funds is also needed. The bursar oversees a secure system for the collection, recording, and banking of cash.

71. The total funding allocated to the school each year contains grants intended for specific purposes, including the development of national priorities such as literacy, information technology and special educational needs. These funds are being targeted by the school as intended. There is an agreed formula for the allocation of the annual capitation to departments in the school. However, some departments in the school are better resourced than others; for example, science receives less than the national average. While a system of bidding for additional funding allows for some flexibility where particular priorities are identified, this has clearly not produced an altogether equitable allocation.

72. The governing body takes particular care when giving consideration to tenders for the renewal of contracts for the provision of services such as cleaning, catering and computers. Before committing the school to any contract, the governors take into account the intended quality of each service, as well as the projected cost. These services are monitored regularly to ensure they comply with the terms of the tender, and as far as possible provide best value.

73. The provision made by the school, particularly teaching, is good overall, though with some variation in practice. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent; they take full advantage of this provision, and overall their learning is also good. There is a sustained high quality in the provision of pastoral care and in personal development. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. Elsewhere, despite

shortcomings in some subjects, leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There has also been a satisfactory improvement in standards since the last inspection. Taking all these factors into account, with funding that is above the national average, the school is judged to be providing good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. In order to improve the quality of educational provision and further raise standards of attainment, the governors, headteacher and staff should focus on:

- (1) **raising standards in design technology and information technology, and improving the curriculum by:**
 - ensuring that sufficient time is allowed for design technology and information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4;
(see paragraphs 6, 9, 31, 33)
 - ensuring that statutory requirements are properly met in design technology at Key Stages 3 and 4;
(see paragraphs 6, 9, 30, 31, 33, 57)
 - ensuring that statutory requirements are properly met in information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4.
(see paragraphs 6, 9, 30, 31, 33, 57)

- (2) **strengthening the effectiveness of line management procedures by:**
 - developing the responsibility of senior managers for:
 - a) rigorously monitoring and supporting subject development, across the school; monitoring the impact of curriculum organisation;
 - b) ensuring effective use of data on pupils' prior attainment for setting targets for improvement in subjects, and tracking progress in Key Stages 3 and 4.
(see paragraphs 35, 41, 51, 52, 58, 60)

- (3) **improving the quality and consistency of subject management, particularly in mathematics, science and art by :**
 - developing responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning;
(see paragraphs 59, 60)
 - improving subject development planning with clear links to school priorities and budget;
(see paragraph 59)
 - making more effective use of assessment information and data on pupils' prior attainment;
(see paragraphs 51, 52)
 - disseminating widely the good range of successful teaching and management in the school.
(see paragraphs 18, 19, 59)

In addition to the key issues, the following should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- targeting funds to improve resources for learning, as finances allow;
(see paragraph 67)
- improving library provision.
(see paragraph 67)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	191
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	16	46	34	2	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1054	186
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	265	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	153	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	192	192

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	167	144	125
	Total	167	144	125
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	88	75	65
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42	48	29
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	124	146	143
	Total	124	146	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65	77	74
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40	55	39
	National	31	37	28

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	182	182

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	102	165	176
	Total	102	165	176
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56	91	97
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	39

per pupil	National	38
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year Who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	66	66

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	-	16.7	16.7	-	3.1	3.1
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	10
Black – other	7
Indian	1
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	2
White	1154
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	1	-
Black – other	-	1
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	24	1
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	224

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.9
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Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,889,596
Total expenditure	2,805,261
Expenditure per pupil	2376
Balance brought forward from previous year	1129
Balance carried forward to next year	85,464

Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	22.0

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1115
Number of questionnaires returned	282

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	45	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	49	3	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	52	11	0	0
The teaching is good.	43	50	4	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	40	18	4	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	44	4	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	28	48	15	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	51	43	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	45	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	37	14	3	12

**PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM,
SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

ENGLISH

75. Pupils enter the school with above average results in the end of Year 6 national tests in English. However, their results for the writing section of the tests are not as high as the reading. Good teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes help them make good progress through the school. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous report. In the sixth form English is a successful and popular option with nearly 40 students in the current Year 12.

76. In the 2000 national tests for 14 year olds the results were well above average. They were very high when compared with the results of pupils in similar schools (based on the entitlement to free school meals). The proportion that reached both the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6 was well above the national average and very high in comparison with similar schools. The pupils did better in English than in science and mathematics. Results have been well above average since 1997 and have improved since the previous inspection. These results represent good achievements given the pupils' earlier results when they left primary school.

77. In the 2000 GCSE English examination the proportion passing at C or higher was well above the national average. It was very high in comparison with similar schools. Far more pupils reached grade C or higher than was indicated by the same pupils' results in their national tests for 14 year olds, so they made very good progress. All candidates passed at G or higher and the average grade was about half a grade higher than the national average. Overall results improved from 1999. In the English literature examination the results were outstanding and reflected the high quality teaching of literature in the department. The school entered more pupils than most schools and yet more than 4 out of 5 candidates passed at grade C or higher - well above the national average. These results were an improvement on the already high standards attained in 1999.

78. In the sixth form, results in the A-level English examination were above average. More candidates passed at grades A-B than in most schools. Students did better than their previous GCSE results had suggested. The results sustained the high standards attained in 1999.

79. In work seen during the inspection, the standards of the current Year 9 pupils are well above average, and their progress is good. Higher attaining pupils are extremely articulate when discussing characters in 'Pride and Prejudice'. They are fluent and perceptive readers. Their standards of writing are very high: accurate, catching the interest of the reader and usually sustaining an appropriate style for the context. The standards of middle attaining pupils range from average to above average. They talk fluently and explain their understanding clearly. They respond well to their reading texts and understand that a novel is trying to present a viewpoint on a theme or attitude. They write effectively in a variety of contexts and successfully composed suitably atmospheric ghost stories during one lesson. Some are not consistently accurate in their use of punctuation and spelling. Their expression does not have the same range of vocabulary and control as the higher attainers. Only a few pupils, including those with special educational needs, are below average. Their speaking and listening skills are average. They have a good ear for vocabulary which they use to identify the correct definition of words such as 'monotony'. They can find correct answers when doing comprehension tasks on articles that match their reading standards. Their writing is neat but they have more weaknesses in spelling and formal expression than other pupils.

80. In Year 11, pupils' progress continues to be good, and standards are well above average, matching those achieved in the most recent GCSE examinations. During a lesson on the poem 'War Photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy, higher attaining pupils were highly articulate. Their understanding of the text was profound, successfully deducing the impact of the religious symbolism and appreciating Duffy's use of language. 'It is as if he's a medium between us and the world,' one pupil observed perceptively when commenting on the influence of the photographer's work. The writing of these pupils is highly accurate with a mature range of vocabulary. The standards of middle attaining pupils range from average to above average. They also speak fluently and listen well. Their comprehension skills are above average, but when writing about a text they sometimes fail to use their knowledge and understanding to answer the assignment title effectively. The standards of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, range from average to below average. They answer questions clearly but do not provide as much detail as other pupils. When discussing some of the

themes and events in 'Of Mice and Men' they relied on the teacher's prompting and guidance to help them understand fully the points the author was making. They paragraph consistently when writing, but errors in punctuation, expression and spelling stop most of these pupils reaching the expected level.

81. In the sixth form standards are above average and match those achieved in previous A-level examinations. The higher attaining students are well above average and write in detail to support their judgements, using a style that is well expressed. Middle attainers provide less details and do not give enough attention to the impact of the writer's use of language. The lower attaining students make some errors in accuracy. Nevertheless, students are making good progress, and are deepening the quality of their response to literature.

82. Standards of teaching are good throughout the school and contribute significantly to the pupils' good learning and achievements. A significant proportion is very good or excellent. A major strength is the very good subject knowledge of the teachers that leads to the pupils developing a good knowledge and understanding of the texts they study. It also ensures that the pupils are well prepared in the technique of coping successfully with examinations. The pupils work hard during lessons as a result of their own high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes, as well as the teachers' careful lesson planning. Teachers also make sure that their planning achieves a good match between their educational aims and each lesson's activities. During the week there was more whole class teaching than is normally seen, but it is very effective. Teachers' questioning is a strength which develops and reinforces understanding. The pace can be very fast. During a 40-minute Year 7 lesson on 'Matilda' the pupils quickly created successful small group recitals with an appropriate emphasis on pace and rhythm. High expectations were evident as they were in most lessons. The department's policy that higher sets in Years 8 and 9 read complete classic texts provides an excellent foundation for success and some very challenging work. In Year 9 a scheme of work devised by two teachers on 'Pride and Prejudice' requires pupils to emulate the style of Austen. During one outstanding lesson they composed, as a class, a very sophisticated and subtly mocking letter from Mr Bennet to Mr Collins. As the teacher recorded their suggestions on the board others suggested improvements. The pupils really grappled with the language to ensure both the content and the style were appropriate. When teaching was satisfactory as distinct from good pupils showed less enthusiasm and the lessons had less pace and variety. There was no evidence of computers, audio/video or overhead transparencies being used in any lesson. There is not enough use of computers in the department's work and planning and teaching need to address this weakness. Marking is mainly detailed and specific. Despite the marking of assessment pieces in National Curriculum levels the pupils in Years 7- 9 are not consistently clear about their current or target levels or the criteria for each level. The use of the pupils' earlier attainments to set targets and track their progress is underdeveloped. There is a good match between the lesson tasks and materials and each teaching set, but there was not very much evidence of teachers modifying tasks to meet the range of attainments within each set.

83. Apart from the use of computers, the department has progressed well since the last inspection. Results are better and standards are higher. The identification of and provision for gifted and talented pupils are good. The work of the department makes a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development, exemplified by highly mature, intelligent and articulate discussion by a Year 12 group discussing 'The Handmaid's Tale'. The department is well led and managed, although opportunities for delegating tasks are restricted. The head of department leads by example in the classroom and her expectations are reflected in the overall good quality of teaching. Formal monitoring of teaching and learning – linked to the development plan and professional development needs - is underdeveloped. Some pupils enter Year 7 with writing skills that are at a Level 3 or low Level 4 standard. Consequently, there is a need to make specific provision to help them reach the expected levels.

Drama

84. Drama is a strength in the school. In the 2000 GCSE examination standards were in line with the national average. These results were an improvement on the results of 1999. In the sixth form standards have been above average for the last two years. This is a better achievement than might be expected by the students' earlier results. In work seen during the inspection standards in Year 13 match the examination performances. In Year 11 the standards are above average, higher than in previous years.

85. An important factor in the achievement of better standards in Year 11 is the way the teacher has looked carefully at the pupils' previous results in their end of Key Stage 3 tests and used them to set a target and a potential grade. She includes the pupils in this process so they know precisely how to improve. Their highly

motivated and confident work confirms the effectiveness of this approach. Pupils performed a series of scripted pieces. They applied successfully their knowledge and understanding of voice projection, gesture and facial expression to develop a convincing portrayal. They evaluated their strengths and weaknesses with honesty, supported each other, and in some cases achieved successfully the daunting task of performing monologues.

86. Teaching is consistently very good and equips the pupils with the required knowledge and understanding of performance techniques and helps them to apply these effectively. Expectations are high and relationships are very good. This means that the pupils and students are enthused and at the same time highly receptive to constructive criticism. As well as offering a busy programme of extra curricular and cultural activities drama also makes a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development, especially with regard to working independently and co-operatively.

Key skills; speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum

87. Teachers promote the specialist vocabulary of their subject well. In mathematics, Year 8 pupils were expected to use the correct terms when explaining their understanding to the rest of the class. In modern foreign languages, there is a frequent use of the target language. In history, pupils learn specialist vocabulary for homework during Years 7-9. There are good displays of key terms in physical education. A similar emphasis exists in geography, sometimes backed up by good use of dictionaries as in a Year 12 lesson on urban development. There is also good practice in design technology and information technology. In art, vocabulary is a key focus in the lessons but is underdeveloped for pupils with special educational needs. They have no systematic means of recording the terms or using them in the correct context.

88. The development of reading skills is more uneven and sometimes not consistent within a subject. For example, although the lowest attaining pupils have the chance to read aloud and to interpret texts, such an explicit approach was less evident for other pupils. There is no set reading scheme in modern foreign languages but there are frequent chances to use texts to find answers to questions. In Years 11-13 there is a good use of authentic materials in the target languages. In history, there are lots of chances for reading aloud and developing comprehension skills but mainly in answer to short questions. In information technology, there are only limited opportunities in Years 7-9, but there are far more in the sixth form. In general, there was little evidence of teachers developing systematic approaches to reading for information and understanding.

89. The development of writing skills has some good features but good practice is not consistent. In mathematics the presentation of the pupils' work is of a very high standard. Although correcting spelling errors is included in the department's schemes of work in practice this does not happen frequently. In modern foreign languages there is a good emphasis on grammar and punctuation. By Year 11 pupils write extended paragraphs about themselves in the target language. History teachers give good explanations of what is required in an essay but effective techniques such as writing frames that help pupils structure their work were not seen. The teachers point out spelling errors but there was no evidence of the pupils learning or correcting them. Dance course work is of a good standard. In geography pupils have the chance to write in different formats such as letters. In information technology, the pupils in Years 10-11 write in full range of formats, often clearly meeting a specific purpose.

MATHEMATICS

90. Standards in mathematics overall are above national average. In 2000, Key Stage 2 results show that pupils' attainment on entry to the school was above the national average, and this is typical of the standards on entry. In 2000, the proportion of pupils' achieving Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above at Key Stage 3 was well above the national average, and matched the teachers' assessments. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of pupils' achieving Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above were well above average. In terms of average points scores for 2000, pupils' scores are above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Average points scores in mathematics for 2000 are better than science but not as good as English. Since the last report the average national curriculum points in mathematics have increased overall at a greater rate than that nationally. In terms of average points scores, the department adds satisfactory value over Key Stage 3.

91. In 2000, at Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE A*-C grades was well above the national average and above the national average for A*-G grades. Compared to the previous year, this represents a

consolidation of the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades and a significant improvement in terms of A*-G grades. The average points scores for 2000 in mathematics are below those of English and of separate and double science, but slightly above single science. Comparing average points scores at Key Stage 3 in 1998 with Key Stage 4 in 2000 for the same cohort of pupils, the value added by the department over the key stage is satisfactory.

92. The department enters the highest attainers in Year 10 for the GCSE Intermediate Level examination. In 2000 all pupils entered were successful in gaining grades B and C which forms a preparation for the GCSE Higher Level examination the following year.

93. Pupil numbers entering the sixth form are small and A-level mathematics students' average points scores have been declining since the last report. In 2000, only half of the students entered at A-level achieved or improved their capability when compared with their levels of prior attainment at GCSE. Students' results at modular mathematics in 2000 are similar to those at A-level.

94. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Year 7 pupils were observed using and applying mathematics, extending a concept and articulating their thinking through set tasks from a commercial scheme. For example, higher attaining pupils could determine in order of size, numbers expressed in index form. Lower attaining pupils demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the factors and multiples of numbers, using the correct terminology and extending it to include square numbers. Pupils' numerical skills are generally satisfactory, although calculators are used in a random way. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers with the help of learning support assistants attached to specific pupils. Across the rest of the key stage, pupils follow the department's own scheme of work. In Year 8, higher attaining pupils were competent at solving linear algebraic equations and applied these skills with equations formed from mathematical problems involving shape and space well. Lower attaining pupils were observed planning a visit to a theme park which reinforced their knowledge of number well. In Year 9 higher attaining pupils identified and made good use of trigonometrical relationships applied to right angled triangles rounding off answers to make them sensible. Average attaining pupils understand the difference between discrete and continuous data, applying their knowledge to grouped frequency distributions and the appropriate representative values. Pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of shape, space and measurement and produce neat and accurate diagrams to support learning, for example, in their work on transformation geometry and pie charts. Pupils' literacy skills are not well developed outside the planned programme of opportunities included in the scheme of work.

95. In the work seen at Key Stage 4, the standards achieved by the highest attaining pupils are above average, whilst those achieved by the average and lowest attaining pupils are average. Pupils work well with the open-ended task requirements for GCSE, although opportunities for extended work and developing estimating skills are infrequent. Higher attaining pupils construct accurate graphs of quadratic functions using their knowledge of directed number well. Average attainers make good use of number and algebra to find term-to-term rules and formulae for sequences of numbers. Lower attaining pupils can solve simple linear equations showing the stages involved. All pupils continue to develop a good understanding of shape, space and measurement, although poorly presented work often goes unchallenged. The level of attainment when handling data is above average. Lower attainers confidently calculate the mean of collected data presented in the form of a frequency table and illustrate the information well in a variety of ways.

96. In the sixth form, standards of work seen are above average, and reflect satisfactory levels of achievement. Scrutiny of students' work shows previously taught skills being applied well; for example, kinematics in two and three dimensions involved understanding vectors, plotting and interpreting their paths, in a variety of everyday situations. Students record their work well from the blackboard, which contributes to their learning. Both algebraic and numeric skills are good.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory or better overall but with some unsatisfactory aspects. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 4 and are satisfactory in the sixth form. They are also satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 where one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Specialist teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and a strength of the department. However, teaching of basic skills is unsatisfactory because of the lack of a literacy and numeracy policy and strategies for their implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Lesson objectives are not always shared with pupils, neither is there opportunity to review what has been taught and learnt by the end. Some lessons are strongly teacher led and introductions

are overlong with little time for pupils to practise newly taught skills. Teachers' expectations are very high at Key Stage 4 but less so at Key Stage 3 where there is too little challenge for gifted and talented pupils. Relationships are very good, and pupils respond well to expectations of both high standards and good behaviour. Where lessons are good, teachers demonstrate good observational and analytical skills, intervening well with questions, engaging and deepening pupils' understanding. Where lessons are satisfactory, teaching tends to focus less on conceptual development, understanding and intellectual effort and more on process. An unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 9 which took no account of pupils' understanding, strengths and weaknesses, relying heavily on the textbook. Teaching methods include little practical experience to support learning. Opportunities for pupils' personal development are limited with few investigational activities, although the small size of some teaching rooms discourages ambitious, imaginative teaching styles.

98. Pupils' attitude and response to mathematics are very good, leading to satisfactory progress being made. The use of time is effective, for example, the lowest attaining pupils' work is broken down into 'bite' size activities, reflecting their capacity to concentrate. Pupils' work to a generally high standard with accurate diagrams, detailed examples in notebooks and complete exercises aiding understanding and progress. Where progress is less secure, it is a result of poor written work unchallenged by teachers and leading to a decline in standards. At both key stages homework, which is issued consistently, is used to reinforce what has been taught in lessons, but extension work particularly for the gifted and talented pupils is not evident. Exercise books are regularly marked, but with little diagnostic and evaluative comment from teachers to help pupils improve. The quality and use of ongoing assessment is unsatisfactory because marking is not standardised or monitored across the department. As a result, there is little appreciation of pupils' comparative progress or their strengths and weaknesses particularly at Key Stage 3, and marking does not inform curriculum planning and classroom practice. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment over the key stages including the sixth form are satisfactory.

99. Opportunities for pupils' personal development through group work, open-ended tasks, and discussion are limited. Provision for pupils to take more responsibility for their learning, establish and test hypotheses and pose questions in lessons, are few. There is also a lack of work suited to pupils' needs, and extension work included in lesson plans, particularly for the high attaining pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4. As a result, classes are taught as a whole rather than teachers responding to pupils' known strengths and weaknesses at both Key Stages 3 and 4. The use of information technology to support teaching and learning across the whole department is unsatisfactory and needs to be formally introduced into the scheme of work with planned opportunities for all pupils starting with Year 7.

100. Leadership and management in the subject are less than satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance and the taking of effective action as a result is unsatisfactory. Clear educational direction is insecure because the departmental development plan is incomplete and not fully 'costed' with appropriate responsibilities shared between staff. Despite improved test and examination performance, action to tackle weaknesses identified in the last report, including assessment and limited teaching styles, has been unsatisfactory.

101. Whilst the department is seeking to improve standards, existing policies, such as the marking policy, require further clarification to support this ambition. Teaching and learning strategies need to be monitored and evaluated regularly with opportunities for the sharing of good practice which exist within the department to influence and improve the practice of others.

102. The teaching of basic skills needs to be formally introduced into lessons together with a revised scheme of work and methods to monitor pupils' improvement, particularly for pupils in Year 7, the highest attainers, and pupils with special educational needs across both key stages. The department needs to monitor progress of all pupils and students, set targets and use assessment information to inform planning. Accommodation and learning resources are adequate, although the quality of the learning environment could be improved by greater celebration of pupils' achievements.

Numeracy

103. The previous report required the mathematics department to 'employ strategies for developing further the skills of numeracy to enable pupils to handle elementary number processes mentally'. The mathematics department has produced a joint draft numeracy policy for both the subject and the whole curriculum, but it is

not yet fully implemented. In Year 7, a commercial scheme is used to develop pupils' numeracy skills. There is no formal strategy applied in the mathematics department across the rest of Key Stage 3 to enable pupils to handle elementary numeric processes mentally.

104. Applications and aspects of numeracy across the curriculum focus mainly on the interpretation of data and use of graphs at Key Stage 3. Mental and estimating skills are not encouraged and the teachers often provide the numerical outcome to problems. There is no policy on the use of the calculator and reliance on it for straightforward calculations is positively discouraged in some areas of the curriculum. In geography, good use is made of number on fieldwork studies, interpreting climate and rainfall data. In history, pupils make use of scale, ratio and proportion constructing timelines. In science, Year 9 pupils use the average number of flowers in a quadrant area to calculate the number of flowers in a field. In information technology there is extensive use of spreadsheets by Year 8 pupils and databases in Year 9.

105. At Key Stage 4 good use is made of algebra, substitution and transformation which continues into sixth form physics and chemistry lessons. In science, Year 10 pupils made use of standard form with negative indices when examining the pressure pupils exert on the ground. In geography, pupils measured the load and volume of rivers, based on a field work exercise. In information technology, the analysis of data, construction of pie charts, drawing graphs, use of formulae, fractions and Σ are commonplace at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Geography, design technology and information technology are the only departments to include a numeracy policy in their schemes of work.

106. Numeracy requires more promotion about the school. There is little provision in the junior library, particularly for the lowest attaining pupils and few occasions where number can be observed or reinforced through posters or promotions about the school other than within the mathematics department. Poems on numeracy and the millennium produced by Year 8 pupils are displayed in one corridor and geometry terms to emphasise precision and accuracy in fabric design are on display in a textiles room. Overall, despite a school audit, there is no co-ordinated cross-curricular approach established for pupils at both key stages and in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

107. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was above the national average, while the proportion achieving Level 6 and above was in line with the national average. Teachers' own assessments of pupils' standards were broadly in line with these results. The average points score achieved by the whole year group was also above the national average, and well above that for pupils in similar schools. Since pupils enter the school with standards in science which are above the national average, they are making satisfactory progress. However, results in science at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently below those achieved in mathematics, and well below those in English. Results in the period 1998 to 2000 declined both in the proportion achieving Level 5 or above, and in the average points score across each year group.

108. In 2000, pupils were entered for a range of GCSE examinations. For those taking the separate sciences, the proportions gaining grades in the range A*-C was well above the national average in biology, but below in chemistry and physics. In the double science examination, this figure was well above the national average, but it was below for the single science entries. Across the whole year group, the proportion of candidates gaining at least one pass in a science subject in the range A*-C was an improvement on the 1999 results, and above the national average; the proportion gaining a grade in the range A*-G was in line with national figures. Comparison of results at GCSE with the results which these pupils achieved at the end of Key Stage 3, indicates they made satisfactory progress. Science results for the whole year group were below those in mathematics, and well below those in English. In 1999, a small group of pupils was entered for the Certificate of Achievement and obtained creditable results.

109. The number of students taking A-level science examinations in 2000 was relatively low, so comparisons with national statistics are unreliable. While all entries gained a pass grade, there was only one grade in the higher A-B range. Compared with forecast grades based on performance at GCSE, students did relatively well in biology, satisfactorily in chemistry, but less well in physics. The average points scores for students taking A-levels in biology and chemistry have improved consistently since 1998, but have been more erratic in

physics. Numbers taking science subjects at A and AS-level have increased this year, particularly in biology, but are still low overall.

110. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards reflect the level of performance in tests and examinations at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4, but in the sixth form they are higher than indicated by results. The standard of work seen in Year 7 is also above average, with pupils from the start being provided with new and thought provoking work, building on that undertaken in primary schools. For instance, pupils discuss with confidence the temperature variations which take place when molten wax cools to a solid, and produce good quality graphs from their results, leading to identification of the melting point. They understand the meaning of key words such as condensation, evaporation, and even sublimation. By Year 9, pupils learn how to investigate the plant life in a given habitat, and one group of pupils was very involved in learning how to estimate the total number of a species in a given area. Another Year 9 class were not so fully stretched in a lesson on sound; although the demonstration of sound being unable to travel through a vacuum was effective, and clearly understood, the questions which followed did not challenge and extend pupils sufficiently. There was no discussion on whether light can travel through a vacuum, for instance.

111. In preparation for GCSE examinations in Key Stage 4, pupils' standards show wide variations, partly through differences in the courses they are following, but also because of wide variations in teachers' expectations. A physics group considered the different characteristics of waves, and clearly understood the difference between wavelength, frequency and amplitude. Pupils in another group confidently explained the difference between force and pressure. However, pupils of similar levels of attainment were not so strongly challenged in chemistry lessons on acids and alkalis, and on chemical reactions of the halides. Pupils of lower levels of attainment also progress at different rates; one group of pupils worked purposefully and independently when preparing for an investigation on the solubility of sugar, while those in another group made variable progress when analysing distance/time graphs. In the sixth form, there is a good working atmosphere in all classes, with students particularly involved in their work in lessons when investigating the action of an enzyme, using vernier scales, and using calculations for empirical formulae. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into classes, and also make satisfactory progress. Teachers are aware of which pupils have special needs, but do not always take into account their specific targets in their lesson planning.

112. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and was very good in a small proportion of lessons, all with pupils of below average attainment. In a Year 9 class, for example, pupils considered the need for a balanced diet, with the style of teaching encouraging pupil involvement, including research in leaflets to discover facts about food for themselves. As a result, a very good working atmosphere developed. The teaching of higher attaining groups is normally thorough, but often fails to stimulate pupils' involvement in the same way. In lessons on genetics, on waves, and on hormones, teachers did not provide sufficient activities for the pupils to do. While teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is mostly sound, there is a relative lack of specialist knowledge in physics. Even the display of work and posters in laboratories has little physics content. In their lesson planning, teachers concentrate on the range of work to be covered, and often include a plan for the time to be spent on each section of work; however, there is little emphasis placed on teaching strategies, on making the work interesting, or on methods to enthuse pupils about the wonders of science. Liaison with the technicians is good. Teachers have a high expectation of pupils listening carefully, and of standards of behaviour. But, in a high proportion of lessons, teachers talk for too long, and it is to the pupils' credit that they continue to sit quietly. As a consequence, there is too little challenge for pupils to think about their work; and there is too much copying of notes from the board with insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their own words or to ask questions.

113. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The emphasis given to literacy is variable across the department, but there are occasional opportunities for extended and original writing, for example, when pupils undertake investigations. A minority of teachers place particular emphasis on key words when they are introduced and, in some laboratories, these are displayed to reinforce pupils' understanding, and to help pupils to recall them. The level of numeracy is generally satisfactory and its development encouraged by the use of graphs and formulae; but students in sixth form lessons show wide variation in confidence when tackling basic calculations such as percentages and ratios. Pupils are able to recall the last result they achieved in national tests, but, except for those in the sixth form, are not generally aware of their individual target for the next stage. The marking of books is variable across the department. A minority of books are marked frequently and in depth, with encouraging comments, and targets for improving standards. A significant proportion of marking

fails to comply with school policy. There is no reference to national norms, such as National Curriculum levels. Assessments at the end of each topic, and of pupil investigations, are more thorough. Homework is set regularly, but is too often routine and too rarely interesting and challenging.

114. Pupils' attitude to their work is very good. They follow instructions carefully, work safely, and co-operate particularly well in groups. They listen to their peers, and show respect for their opinions. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Whenever pupils are given the opportunity to use their initiative, they do so to the full. They are willing to enter into discussions about their work, and respond well in question and answer sessions. They show confidence when they discuss their work, and rarely deviate from the task in hand.

115. The curriculum offered is in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3, with a comprehensive scheme of work. In Key Stage 4, the school attempts to match the curriculum offered to pupils' aptitude for science. This is not entirely successful, as a minority of pupils spend too high a proportion of their week on science subjects, and too many pupils spend as little as 10 per cent of their time in taking single science. One of the disadvantages of this system is that it appears to undervalue double science, so that some pupils taking this option, even if achieving high grades, do not feel they have been well prepared for A-level science subjects, and therefore may take other options in the sixth form.

116. The leadership and management of science are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient sense of purpose and teamwork, with inconsistencies in the implementation of policies such as marking, and also in target setting for pupils. The department has devoted insufficient time to consideration of its priorities, and the cost of implementing these, or of the steps it needs to take to implement school priorities. There is no development plan for the current year, no longer-term strategy for development, and no estimate of the level of additional resourcing needed to improve provision. There is little monitoring of teaching, and insufficient discussion of teaching skills across the department, with the result that there is little or no variety in teaching styles. The school aim of challenging all pupils is not sufficiently and regularly practised therefore. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has been reviewed, but those for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are lacking in detail. There is little extra-curricular provision, extra revision classes are not available for all pupils as they approach examinations, and the use of new technology is not integrated into the work of all pupils and all teachers. Staff development requirements are not routinely identified, but it is urgently required, for example, in the use of information technology in science lessons. There are also serious health and safety concerns about the storage of dangerous chemicals, and of the ease of access and the operation of the main gas taps. The result of all these deficiencies is that the department does not have a high enough profile in the life of the school, and is failing to provide a stimulating curriculum for pupils.

117. Since the last inspection, attainment in national tests and examinations has shown few signs of improvement, and has even declined in Key Stage 3 in the last three years. The number of entries for A-level subjects is down. Teaching was described as 'more often good' at the last inspection, but is now more often satisfactory, although there are exemplars of very good practice within the department. In particular, the challenges for pupils are no longer plentiful, and the pace of lessons is not now 'universally brisk'. There is sufficient accommodation, but a number of laboratories need refurbishment; there are also serious difficulties with the water supply and drainage in some laboratories. The range and quality of equipment is poor, with shortages in even basic items such as heat resistant mats, timers, and thermometers. The quality of textbooks has improved, but not for lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4. Furthermore, there is insufficient hardware and software for pupils to experience the use of information technology in their work in science. Overall, the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.

ART

118. Standards in art are average overall, with considerable variation between key stages. They are above average at Key Stage 3 and pupils achieve well. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 is less consistent, and standards at the end of the key stage are below average. Standards in the sixth form are average.

119. In 2000, GCSE results at grades A*-C were below the national average, and above the national average for grades A*-G. Results were better in 1999 when the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C and A*-G grades were both above the national average. At GCSE pupils generally achieve less well in art than in the other subjects they take. The results at A-level in 2000 are in line with national averages overall although with fewer higher grades A-B than usual. The pattern of results over recent years has been uneven and the underlying trend from 1996 shows an improvement rate below the national average.

120. Standards in lessons observed during the inspection are overall above average for 14 year olds. They are below average for 16 year olds. Teaching in the subject is good at Key Stage 3 and ensures that learning is also good, with a very positive effect on the development of good practical skills in a range of media. As a result of well focused tasks, pupils' mastery of painting and colour theory is often very good. They also develop some competence when using and applying the formal elements of line, tone and form. Pupils experience a range of media and the well planned and organised lessons promote good craft skills in 3D (ceramics) and very good work in textiles. However, teaching often fails to provide sufficient opportunities for the development of pupils' ideas. Subsequently experimental work is not evident in most project work. Teaching throughout the key stage however ensures the skills and knowledge pupils acquire are well developed in other practical areas of the curriculum and provide a very good basis for transition to Key Stage 4. Teaching is successful in promoting the understanding of the methods and styles of other artists. For example, the textile designs seen in Years 7 and 8 relating to the study of African and aboriginal art reflected pupils' sound knowledge of the cultures they had studied. Sketchbook work, however, is exclusively carried out at home and lacks the sophistication and depth of research achievable under the direct guidance of the teacher.

121. In Key Stage 4 lessons seen during the inspection, standards were broadly average in Year 10 and below average in Year 11. At this stage, learning is satisfactory because teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to explore and experiment with media and techniques. As a result, many pupils of higher ability often underachieve. The often well-structured lessons do provide opportunities for pupils to engage in a range of experiences including working in mixed media, painting and graphic techniques, textiles and ceramics. Teachers ensure that drawing from observation is often the starting point for extended projects, but they do not encourage pupils to pursue investigation beyond the initial stimulus often enough. Furthermore, the development of work into different craft media stems directly from the first drawing and important exploration and experimentation is missing. As a result, the development of pupils' original ideas lacks the depth and innovation expected at this stage. This depth of study is most notably scarce in the work of pupils of higher ability. The simple process of developing visual ideas from a drawing provides a secure framework for the less able whose practical work is often more advanced than expected. Written studies and investigation of the work of other artists are carried out as projects separate to other practical work. Whilst some pupils engage well in this part of their course, many fail to make connections with their practical work in other projects. A more typical approach, and one which may have more significance and success for all pupils, would see work of this sort being directly linked to their main coursework projects.

122. Teaching, therefore, is satisfactory. Some significant examples of good and very good lessons were seen. The best teaching is in Key Stage 3 and results from well pitched tasks that challenge all pupils in the group. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher provided structured yet demanding work on the paintings of aboriginal tribes. The teacher's knowledge and skills were effectively used to demonstrate technique; the varied method – whole group, individual tuition and frequent questioning – constantly supported and challenged all pupils. Expectation of pupils' capability was high. Similarly in a Year 7 lesson about 'illusion', the task was presented in a structured, stage-by-stage, manner enabling pupils to work on a complex pattern in a supportive atmosphere. Less effective teaching was seen exclusively at Key Stage 4. In these instances tasks are often over-prescribed and fail to provide enough opportunities for exploration and extension. Subsequently outcomes were too similar and lacked originality. The result of this ensures that most pupils will achieve a pass in their final examination but too few are making good progress towards achievement of the highest grades. Also at this stage most pupils do not have a clear understanding of how their work is assessed and, therefore, they find it difficult to recognise the significance of the guidance they are given. Assessment should be a more significant part of teaching, helping all pupils to consider assessment objectives and criteria when planning and carrying out their work.

123. The subject is satisfactorily administered on a day-to-day basis and the head of department provides care and support to both staff and pupils. The ethos created and maintained by the head of department is secure and encouraging to all pupils. However, efforts to promote a steady improvement in the subject are limited by

the lack of coherence in the subject documentation and plans for long-term strategic management. Documentation does not yet set out a clear agenda for development and is lacking some detail in curriculum planning to secure continuity and progression against curriculum objectives. Monitoring of the performance of the subject also lacks rigour. For example, whilst frequent visits are made to classrooms, there is no formal system of monitoring to ensure the continued development and improvement of teaching. Steps to develop the subject, therefore, are currently inadequate to deliver sustainable improvement or to build on the success already achieved, and progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. At the end of Key Stage 3, in teacher assessments, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 and above in recent years has been above national expectations. The percentage reaching Level 6 and above is well below national expectations. The results are not however subject to external verification.

125. At the end of Key Stage 4, the only course assessed in recent years at GCSE level has been child development. In 1999, results at A*-C and at A*/A levels were well above national averages for home economics subjects. There was a decrease in performance in 2000, but evidence suggests that results for individual pupils are consistently above expectation in relation to their earlier achievements.

126. Work seen during the inspection is below average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 even though in Year 7 standards are average. The progress pupils make during this Key Stage is therefore unsatisfactory. This is due to an insufficient amount of taught curriculum time in Years 7 and 8. Additionally, in all three years of the key stage, pupils receive disjointed experiences because of the way the curriculum is organised. During Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils continue to make unsatisfactory progress as they follow courses designed for lower attaining pupils which are unsuited to their abilities. With only the minimum time allocated at this key stage, pupils are unable to make the necessary progress to improve their earlier attainments and standards remain below average at the end of Key Stage 4.

127. Standards of manufacturing using resistant and compliant materials at both key stages using tools and equipment are above average. They are used safely and accurately to create a range of products that are finished attractively and with attention to detail. The progress of some lower attaining pupils is hampered through fear of equipment usage. The limited experiences they receive does not enable them to overcome this difficulty. Many pupils with special educational needs achieve above expectation, particularly at Key Stage 4, reflecting their interest in the subject, good literacy levels and the sensitive support and encouragement they receive from teachers. This is particularly evident in the GCSE child development course. Standards of designing remain low throughout both key stages. Pupils fail to recognise the importance of critical and evaluative thinking in the design process, and this limits their understanding. As pupils progress through the school, they increasingly develop the attitude that design and technology is concerned with recreational craft. Higher attaining pupils are limited in the extent to which they are able to solve, creatively, design problems that relate to the needs of different user groups. However, they show the potential for creativity in textiles projects. Standards of drawing at the end of Key Stage 4 are immature, but are beginning to improve at Key Stage 3 compared with the last inspection. Pupils' knowledge and feeling for the materials they use is satisfactory in the narrow range of contexts where they have undertaken projects, for example, when using acrylic in Year 7 to construct a key fob. The literacy levels of all pupils are above average and most show a sense of audience in their writing by the time they have reached Key Stage 4. The use of computers is however limited in all courses to basic word processing, sometimes with simple clip-art images integrated into a presentation. In Year 8 textiles, attractive images and complex stitching techniques are incorporated into cushion designs using CAD/CAM techniques. Standards of numeracy are sufficient to achieve accurate drawing, measurement and shaping of materials by all abilities at both key stages.

128. The majority of the teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. In the remaining minority, there are some very good lessons and a similar number that are satisfactory. As a result, pupils' learning is good even at Key Stage 3 despite the shortage of curriculum time. In Key Stage 4 learning is satisfactory because, although teaching is good, weaknesses in course provision and time allocation restrict pupils' progress. All of the teachers are well qualified and have high expectations of the pupils at both key stages, but higher attaining pupils are not challenged or encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupil management is uniformly very good, and when combined with the general enjoyment and enthusiasm gained by pupils at Key Stage 3, this results in a good ethos for working and good progress in lessons. Such are the positive attitudes

to the subject that many pupils attend after school clubs to extend their experiences. Teachers generally use a pleasant encouraging manner throughout. At Key Stage 3, they do not see pupils often enough to get to know their strengths and weaknesses as individuals, and therefore do not target their expectations closely enough. Effective organisation of lessons ensures that all pupils make good gains in the learning of manufacturing skills. In food studies, they learn with attention to detail about the connections between diet and health. Good teaching strategies in home economics subjects are employed to ensure that literacy is effectively promoted. In graphics lessons, pupils are encouraged to take some risks through experimenting with new ways of presenting their ideas on paper. At Key Stage 4, the teachers get to know the pupils better as individuals and adapt their lesson plans to accommodate their needs in most material areas. Learning is satisfactory at this stage, because many pupils are not on courses that challenge them sufficiently, and they do not apply appropriate amounts of intellectual rigour to their work. Visual resources are used well in textiles and food to stimulate pupils learning. Wall displays in their work rooms are exciting and well cared for.

129. When the teaching is very good, for example in a Year 10 food studies lesson based on food handling, preservation and storage, the lesson was well planned, well structured and resources were used effectively for teacher demonstration purposes as well as by pupils. The teacher used a range of interesting, examples to illustrate relevant 'real-life' situations. Pupils were challenged by the use of appropriate questioning by the teacher to support and test pupils' understanding of the theme. Intelligent discussion amongst the pupils resulted in effective learning about the limitations of different preservation and storage techniques in commercial and domestic settings. Good quality feedback was given to the pupils to enable them to understand what progress they had made. When the teaching was satisfactory in a Year 10 resistant materials lesson, too much emphasis was placed on manufacturing skills that pupils had previously developed. Limited demands were placed on pupils to develop clear personal learning targets. There was insufficient evaluation of their progress or modification of their approach to improve their understanding of the relationships between the design and manufacture of products.

130. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory because too little time is provided to ensure that pupils are taught the full range of the National Curriculum requirements. Additionally, the time allocation for all pupils at Key Stage 4 is insufficient and there are no post-16 opportunities to enable those pupils with an interest in the subject to progress. Development in the subject has been hampered by curriculum constraints for some time and as a result, there is limited vision and development planning for the subject. Teachers work together and the systems created to administer the subject are well organised and effective. At both key stages, pupils' experiences of modern technologies are extremely limited, including those linked to systems and control, and this limits their understanding of the nature of the subject in the modern world. One part-time technician is inadequate to serve the needs of the whole department. Home economics subjects have no technical support at all.

131. Since the last inspection, the teaching of graphics has improved. Minor improvements to the accommodation and a very recent improvement to the time allocation for Year 9 have also taken place at Key Stage 3. There has been no improvement to standards in designing since the last inspection and provision for control and information technology remains extremely limited. Overall, there has been too little progress since the last inspection. The school needs to ensure full compliance at Key Stage 3 through improving the time allocation in Years 7 and 8, coupled with creating a less disjointed curriculum. At Key Stage 4, pupils need access to courses that reflect their abilities and interests. Throughout both key stages, higher standards need to be promoted in design and higher attaining pupils need greater levels of challenge. To achieve this, pupils also need to be able to use computers more frequently and effectively in their work.

GEOGRAPHY

132. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below national averages; however, they were an improvement upon the 1999 results. Pupils achieving A*-G grades were broadly in line with national figures. In the 2000 A-level examinations the proportion of A-B grades showed a slight fall from the 1999 results, which were broadly in line with the national average. A-level results have shown improvement since 1997 with a higher proportion of students achieving A/B grades; however, the last three

years show that the proportion of students achieving A-E grades remains below national averages. Pupils at 14 and in the sixth form achieve standards which are in line with the national average; however, pupils aged 16 attain standards which are below the national average.

133. In work seen during the inspection pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are generally average; this is confirmed by teacher assessments in 2000, which indicate that about three-quarters of pupils reached the expected Level 5, just above the national expectation. Pupils aged 14 have a good knowledge of Japan; they know the location on the world map and successfully mark the major cities of Japan. Pupils are aware that it is a country of contrasts and they successfully compare the physical features of the coast with the mountainous interior. Studying the industries of Japan gives them a good insight into the Japanese way of life. Lower attaining pupils understand simple factors that influence the location of Tokyo. Higher attaining pupils are aware of the present day dependence on production of technological goods and business dealings. They show a good awareness of air and noise pollution and an understanding of moral and ethical issues in the use of resources. All pupils successfully draw spider diagrams using words and short phrases to record information; they use bullet points effectively to record their notes. Pupils write letters home sharing perceptions of life in Japan comparing life in Japan with Liverpool. Year 8 pupils begin to understand primary, secondary and tertiary industries. However, pupils have difficulty understanding concepts, such as the increase in demands for tuna fish and the effects that this produces on the environment. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a good foundation of the basic geographical skills. However, concepts are less well developed in Years 8 and 9. All pupils make good progress in their learning in Key Stage 3.

134. In work seen during the inspection pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below average; this is confirmed by the recent examination results. Pupils have a secure knowledge about the location of at least three English national parks; they realise the purpose of establishing them within reasonable travelling time from urban centres. Higher attaining pupils cogently argue the advantages and disadvantages of development within national parks. They understand why farmers have had to diversify in order to make a living. However, pupils do not always link different aspects of human, physical and economic geography successfully. Pupils studying tourism in Europe locate Spain, the Canary and Balearic Islands and their major tourist centres. Studying the River Alyn near Mold they start to develop basic fieldwork skills. They are then able to successfully analyse data in order to draw conclusions, but their understanding of concepts and ability to link the different aspects of geography are insufficiently developed in Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils make insufficient progress in relation to their prior attainment in order to build on the basic geographical skills learned in Years 7, 8 and 9. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support and appropriate support by teachers and their peers.

135. In the sixth form, standards are broadly average. Students show a good understanding of hurricanes; they contrast their impact upon developed and less developed countries. They are aware that careful tracking of hurricanes can give prior warning which enables people to make preparations to reduce the impact of possible devastation. Improved access to information technology would enhance the enquiry element. Students successfully study traffic movement, analyse data, and the strategies for overcoming congestion. However, discussions with students and evidence from their books shows they do not find this easy and are reliant on the teacher for help. Sixth form students make good progress; they begin to link a range of human, economic and political factors, although, at times some students have problems grasping concepts.

136. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form; it is satisfactory in Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. The strength of relationships, good behaviour and positive attitudes underpin teaching. Teachers show good subject knowledge and application. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, very good knowledge of hurricanes challenges pupils and consequently extends their knowledge and understanding. Teaching overall is good but there are some shortcomings. There is an insufficient range of teaching strategies to involve pupils in their learning, which constrains their understanding of issues and concepts. Teachers usually have high expectations of the efforts and behaviour of their pupils. The impact of good and very good teaching produces pupils' best efforts; they work hard and maintain their efforts, concentration and persevere to produce good work and learn effectively. However, on several occasions, low expectations, insufficient challenge and lack of pace constrain progress, as seen when Year 10 students study weather in the United Kingdom. Overall, units of work, long term planning and organisation are good ensuring progression and continuity from year to year. However, lesson planning does not always include a sufficient range of activities and tasks in order to meet the need of all pupils; and this constrains progress. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. In

all lessons throughout the age range, pupils with special educational needs are well-integrated and make progress in line with their peers.

137. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and management of the department. Teachers work successfully together as a team. The department has a clear educational direction and the curriculum has developed to include curriculum 2000 requirements. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory because information technology is not used sufficiently to support inquiry aspects. Assessment and policy documents are clear, but insufficient use is made of pupils' results and achievements to track their progress. The department development plan is not fully costed and pupil outcomes are insufficiently used to measure departmental success. Some monitoring of teaching is undertaken within the department by the head of department, but is not regular and systematic enough to share good practice and focus on improved pupil outcomes.

138. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Most issues have been successfully tackled. There has been improvement in both teaching and learning. There is less reliance on work sheets although pupils are still very reliant on the teacher and this is slowing their progress in Key Stage 4. Grouping of pupils in broad ability groups has been successful in improving learning, although there is still an insufficient range of tasks and activities for teaching groups.

HISTORY

139. Standards in history are average overall. Teachers' assessments for 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 show results in line with national averages for pupils achieving level 5 and above. In work seen during the inspection standards were slightly above average. Pupils were able to select and extract information from a variety of sources in response to questions, and describe the events leading to major developments, for example the 'Battle of Hastings'. Pupils in Year 9 demonstrated understanding of the links between events and recognise that a major development will have several contributing factors, for example, in their work on the development of towns in the 19th century. Pupils are very conscientious in their lessons, although there is little evidence of challenge and enquiry. Pupils generally do not investigate their own hypothesis or seek help in understanding, unless it is directly hindering the completion of their task. As such they are not independent learners, but in other respects they are making good progress.

140. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are also average. Results of the GCSE examination indicate standards just above the national average in 2000, an improvement on the results for 1999. Results have fluctuated over the last few years and so there is no clear trend. Over the last four years all pupils entered have achieved at least a pass grade A*-G. In work seen, standards reflect the examination results, and are generally average. Pupils have a good understanding of the nature and events of the 1st World War and recognise the leading figures. They understand the social conditions that were a consequence and higher attaining pupils make the link between them and the rise of Hitler in Germany. They use sources to consider the attitudes of the people at the time and most pupils can identify that there may be ulterior motives in the mind of the writers. There is little evidence of evaluation, or of deciding which information would be most helpful and relevant. Text is used well, however, and pupils' comprehension is good. When it is available pupils use statistical evidence to make comparisons, for example, regarding the relative strength of the allied and axis powers before the 2nd World War and many use computers to present their work and for research. Overall, their progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4.

141. Standards of attainment of students who study history at A-level are just above the national average. In work seen standards were similar, and represent good achievement for the students concerned. Students can select and arrange information in response to questions demonstrating considerable concentration and effort. Essays are clear and well written although identification of the requirements of the title is not precise and students are not selective enough. They have a secure grasp of the characteristics of the period studied and can identify varying viewpoints, supporting judgements with evidence. Students recognise the role of individuals in European events and can evaluate their relative contributions, for example, Bismarck in Year 12 and Lenin in Year 13.

142. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons have good features, such as a clear focus, and teachers' secure knowledge base enables pupils to have confidence in clear explanations. Good use of question and answer at the start of lessons enables pupils to re-call previous work and to learn effectively by

building on this knowledge. In the best lessons teachers encourage their pupils to become active learners and to evaluate the information they obtain. Some lessons are over-directed by the teacher and result in pupils becoming passive receivers of information rather than investigators. As a result, their understanding lacks depth. A good example of pupil involvement was a Year 8 class involved in paired evaluation of the nature of leadership. Teachers' expectations are high and good use is made of history to promote the development of vocabulary and literacy skills. Pupils respond well to oral questioning. Good pupil management results in a calm working environment where pupils can concentrate and remain on task. The use of setting enables teachers to target their lessons at an appropriate level. However, there is little variation of tasks set within groups and some use of work which fail to extend pupils' learning.

143. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is encouraging. Insufficient use is made of National Curriculum attainment target criteria, however, which would enable teachers to focus more closely on the development of key skills. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are unaware of the criteria and as such are unable to assess their own work or to recognise how they may raise the level of their achievement in history. Assessment tasks are largely knowledge based and the department is in the process of re-designing them to meet the needs of National Curriculum assessment of criteria.

144. Management of the department is satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning is under-developed, and hindered by the lack of full department meetings where good practice may be shared, and by the widespread locations of classes. Department development plans are designed with the needs of the school as a whole in mind, and there is no review of the progress of the plans outside the department. History makes good contributions towards the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils, but there is insufficient use of the locality in order to enable pupils to experience first hand investigation or to appreciate the rich diversity of cultures in Great Britain.

145. Since the last report standards at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form have been maintained. There is still insufficient use of information technology although useful modules have been planned, and resources are still limited. There is now a designated history base but there is insufficient cohesion across the department to develop a cohesive ethos.

Sociology

146. The standard of attainment of pupils who study sociology at Key Stage 4 is above the national average. GCSE examination results are well above national averages for grades A*-C and have been so for the last three years. In 2000, all pupils taking the exam gained a pass grade A*-G. Pupils consider the place of the individual within society and the effects of culture and environment upon the development of the individual. They examine the role of the family and the variations of households that exist within society. Pupils have an understanding of the stereotypes that have developed concerning age and youth and reflect on the factors within society that reinforce this image. They consider the variety of ways of surveying opinion and use statistical data to evaluate material.

147. The standard of attainment in the sixth form is well above the national average. Students study A/S level in Year 12 and complete the A-level in Year 13. Results for the last three years have been well above national averages with a 100 per cent pass rate, and in 2000, all students gained at least a grade D. Students investigate the changing role of women in society, and the pressures that this new role can place upon them. They develop the skills of analysis, evaluation and interpretation of data, and use these skills to identify the changing patterns of family and marriage.

148. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and the good rapport between teachers and students enables a collaborative learning environment to develop. Teachers have high expectations of the students and treat their responses with respect. Essays are marked with supportive comments and the use of pre-prepared notes enables students to concentrate on the focus of the lesson rather than note taking.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

149. Overall standards of attainment in information technology are below average. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met. The majority of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not demonstrate a high

enough level of independent competence in the different aspects of information technology and curriculum time is low at both key stages.

150. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have had limited experience of some of the programmes of study such as using spreadsheets, databases and presentation programmes. They have achieved satisfactory levels in these units of work. For example, pupils in Year 7 are able to produce a slide show using clip art and text and higher attaining Year 8 pupils are able to add sounds and special effects in their slide shows about the Victorians. However, they have only one block of 8 double lessons in each year and this covers only a narrow part of the curriculum. Pupils therefore have no access to a substantial part of the expected curriculum, and standards are below average overall.

151. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Only half of the pupils in Key Stage 4 have information technology lessons in Year 10. These are taking a new GCSE course and are likely to attain grades in line with or better than national averages when they complete the course at the end of Year 11. They demonstrate confidence and competence with computers, despite a lack of access in previous years. The other half of Year 10 pupils and those in Year 11 have some access to office and computer related courses, but these do not cover the full range of the information technology programmes of study. In particular, pupils have no access to the control element. Standards of these pupils are low because of lack of access to information technology in previous years, for example, some Year 11 pupils have not had experience with spreadsheets for two years. The requirements of the National Curriculum for information technology are not fully met in this key stage, and this lowers standards.

152. In the sixth form, attainment is above average. As a result of appropriate courses, good teaching and the very positive attitudes of pupils, learning is good. For less confident students on a key skills course, achievement is good. They develop skills with spreadsheets, with word processing and with keyboard skills. All students are likely to reach the required level of expertise. In the other new courses, students are likely to achieve levels in line with or above national expectations. Higher attaining students work on more complex computer related problems such as computer problems in a supermarket.

153. In all key stages, work is well matched to pupils' capabilities in lessons. Lower attaining pupils get additional support or work appropriate to their attainment. Higher attaining pupils have more difficult work and opportunities to extend their skills.

154. Despite problems of curriculum coverage in Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are improving as a result of new, more specific units of work in Key Stage 3 and a new GCSE course in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, standards have improved significantly. Three new courses have been initiated which have generated a great deal of interest from students. Numbers of students following information technology courses in the sixth form have increased dramatically and standards are much improved. However, the opportunities to develop information technology skills are identified insufficiently within subject schemes of work and most subjects make unsatisfactory use of these skills. Some work takes place in design and technology using a computer aided design programme, and there is good use in some physical education lessons.

155. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good specialist knowledge of the subject and appropriate emphasis is placed on correct use of technical language. Explanations are clear, and lessons are well planned and prepared with clear objectives. High standards of behaviour are expected and groups are well managed. For example, movement to and from the computers is well organised and no time is wasted. Worksheets and activities are well prepared and are adapted to the needs of the group. For example, lower attaining Year 8 pupils have simpler work on spreadsheets and work at a slower pace than higher attaining pupils. Lessons are interesting and challenging for all abilities. Homework is used effectively to support and consolidate the work covered in lessons. Marking is thorough, particularly in Key Stage 4 and post 16, sometimes one-to-one with pupils as they complete the work. Pupils are aware of the level they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Number work is integral to many computer lessons and progress is not usually hampered because of weak number skills. Pupils in Key Stage 3 can produce graphs and charts to illustrate information. Some lessons emphasise the technical language associated with the work, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to talk about their work. For pupils with special educational needs there is insufficient emphasis on the words used in information technology.

156. Pupils' attitudes are very good and, in response to good teaching, they learn well. Good support from the two technicians makes a positive contribution to pupil's learning. Pupils show very good levels of concentration and are very well behaved. They are highly motivated and when given the opportunity, work well collaboratively. Pupils rarely waste time and their behaviour is excellent. The atmosphere in lessons is very positive, reflecting the school's attitudes, values and beliefs.

157. The leadership of information technology is very good. In the last eighteen months, substantial funding has been allocated to this subject. Two new members of staff have been appointed. New systems have been hired and bought, new computer networks established, computer rooms have been refurbished and optic fibre lines now link the main buildings. There is a permanent Internet link and many pupils have their own e-mail address. Post 16 pupils and all staff have access to computers at any time of the day and pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 have access to a computer suite after school. Modern software has been purchased, new courses have been established in all key stages and there are new examination courses in Year 10 and in the sixth form. Department staff have had training relating to the new courses and to the new computers and networks. Additionally, the head of department has provided in-service for staff and governors. Two new technicians have been appointed who make significant contributions to the maintenance of the computers and the teaching and learning in lessons. The head of department monitors the quality of teaching and learning within the department though this has not been formalised. The recent initiatives have had a significant impact on standards achieved by pupils in information technology. A measure of the success of the recent improvements is the number of pupils who have opted to stay on in the sixth form and take computer-related courses. Numbers have increased substantially this year and additional computers have had to be purchased to accommodate the larger groups.

158. However, despite this success, the amount of time allocated to the subject is well below the recommended level at Key Stages 3 and 4. As a result, teachers have insufficient time to cover the range of skills required by the National Curriculum. In some schools in a similar situation, teachers in other subjects teach these skills in their subject lessons. In this school, however, many of these teachers require further training and computer resources in subject areas are inadequate. The deficiencies in information technology are well recognised by the school. Since the previous inspection, satisfactory progress has been made in improving the facilities but not the curriculum provision. There is need to ensure that all pupils have access to the full range of the National Curriculum for information technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

159. In 2000, teachers assessed the attainment of pupils at age 14 as being above average. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was well above average in both French and German. All the pupils entered gained passes at A*-G and this is above the national average. These results show a steady improvement from the already high results indicated at the previous inspection. Pupils gained results that were above the average for similar schools and above those for most other subjects they studied. Results at A-level were broadly average in French and above average in German.

160. In general, pupils' attainment is above average when they come to the school. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards that pupils attain are above average at age 14, well above average at age 16 and above average in the sixth form. There are no wide differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and their overall achievement is good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are generally entered for GCSE and the 100 per cent pass rate at A*-G is a good indication of their success. The use of information technology for editing and enhancing pupils' work is poor. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills especially in those lessons where there is an emphasis on writing and grammar. Attainment has risen over the time since the previous inspection.

161. By age 14, pupils can answer questions about such topics as their family and their homes, people's jobs and occupations, shopping for food and drink and their daily routine in school. Pupils listen carefully and show a high level of concentration when the teacher or other pupils are speaking and when they are listening to audio tapes. Pupils have good opportunities to practise speaking. The vast majority are confident speakers and try hard with pronunciation. By age 14 most pupils are able to carry out short conversations with two or three exchanges and express their likes and dislikes, about school for example. Higher attaining pupils can carry out more sophisticated conversations using different tenses and a good range of vocabulary. They are able to

vary their use of language to fit different situations. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 French lesson where the teacher used a good “warm up” question and answer session to provide opportunities for pupils to practice their language in situations which required quick thinking and use of a wide vocabulary by higher attaining pupils. Pupils develop their reading skills mainly by reading textbooks and worksheets to find the answers to questions. These often contain authentic material that makes them more challenging and pupils’ reading skills are good overall. There is an emphasis on grammar and punctuation in written work and pupils try hard to get their work correct. By age 14, most pupils are able to write good paragraphs in the language being taught which are accurate and use a good range of vocabulary. Spelling is not a strong point for many pupils.

162. By age 16, pupils extend these topics as part of their preparation for examinations and add others such as illness and going to the doctor, their daily routines, household tasks and holidays. The good base of skill developed previously is extended well in Years 10 and 11. Progress is particularly strong in Year 11 when pupils are being prepared for examinations and they achieve well. Higher attaining pupils show a high level of ability with spoken language. Many high attaining pupils write high quality extended pieces about themselves, their families and the local area which are very accurate, show a wide range of vocabulary and occasional touches of humour.

163. Students in the sixth form listen to tapes of news broadcasts and are able to comment on them in discussion. In Year 13, for example, students study some political aspects of life in Chile. They also use texts from magazines which would be read by teenagers in those countries. Students in the A-level group showed good translation skills when working on articles about immigration into France.

164. The quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is satisfactory overall. There is good or very good teaching in half of the lessons, and unsatisfactory teaching in just under one-fifth, but there are marked differences within this overall picture. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. In Year 11 teaching is never less than satisfactory and it is good or very good in two-thirds of lessons. A strong feature of the teaching in Year 11 and in Year 13 is the teachers’ very good subject knowledge of preparation for examinations and this is a significant factor in pupils’ examination success. Where teaching is unsatisfactory there is a lack of clarity about classroom management and organisation that inhibits pupils’ progress. A lot of time is spent, for example, laboriously writing on the white board when pupils’ and teacher’s time could have been saved by displaying the work by overhead projector. In some lessons a large proportion of the lesson is conducted in English and pupils are clearly not then learning in the language being taught. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons lack challenge at a suitable level for the pupils, and move at a slow pace so pupils become bored because the work is too easy. Where teaching is at its best, the lesson is carefully planned to provide a variety of activities that move at brisk pace and teachers have high expectations of pupils’ performance. This was clearly seen in a Year 7 French lesson where the teacher made very good use of flashcards and question and answer techniques to teach a substantial amount of new vocabulary. The whole lesson was conducted in the language being taught, and by the end the majority of pupils were able to conduct short conversations with great confidence, describing themselves and other people. Many of the lessons which are otherwise satisfactory lack a range of work tailored to the needs of the range of attainment found in most classes. There is often little extension work for pupils who finish their work quickly. In many lessons teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning by providing greater involvement in lessons which would improve their confidence more. A strong feature of all of the teaching is very good class control which is achieved without fuss and with quiet authority. The teachers show a high level of care and commitment to the pupils and provide a range of extra classes and support outside school hours. Pupils’ behaviour is excellent and they show very good attitudes to work and a high level of concentration in lessons. There are excellent relationships between pupils and with their teachers, particularly in Year 11 and in the sixth form. These attitudes make a substantial contribution to pupils’ good achievement and progress. Where they are linked to good teaching, in Year 11 for example, pupils attain high standards.

165. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils’ moral, social and cultural development. In lessons there is a strong moral dimension and pupils are taught right from wrong, and to respect each other. Spontaneous applause for good performance is common in lessons. There is good provision for social development through taking turns and working together in groups. There are trips to France, Germany and Spain. These add to the social and cultural experience of the pupils and add to the cultural element that is present in many lessons. Students in Year 12 have opportunities for work experience in France.

166. There are good assessment procedures in place. These provide consistent data for tracking pupils' attainment and progress and for giving pupils details of what level they are at. The further use of this data for curriculum planning and for setting targets is not well developed. There is a good scheme of work and handbook in place which provide a secure basis for lesson planning. The accommodation is sufficient but some rooms are small and in a poor state of decoration, as at the time of the previous inspection. They do not provide a satisfactory working environment for teachers or pupils. The curriculum is good, but the arrangements for options make it difficult for pupils to study two languages in Years 10 and 11. The department is well run and administered, although some non-specialist teaching has affected attainment and progress for some pupils. Overall, management is satisfactory, because there is little systematic monitoring of teaching in order to share good practice within the department, and there is insufficient use of information technology to support learning. However, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous report, particularly in further improving the positive standards of attainment that were reported then.

Latin

167. Latin is studied by a group of Year 10 pupils as an extra subject outside school hours. During the inspection it was possible to observe only one lesson. Teaching in this lesson was good. Pupils were working very hard and with enthusiasm at some challenging grammatical concepts. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and her good teaching methods lead to strong gains in attainment. The subject also makes a strong contribution to pupils' literacy development.

MUSIC

168. Teacher assessment in 2000 for pupils aged 14 show that attainment is overall in line with national expectations. Standards are similar to those at the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. The GCSE results for music in 2000 show a considerable improvement on the variable results of previous years. The take-up for examination courses is low, and comparison with national standards can be unreliable. Results in the sixth form have fluctuated since the previous report. However, in 2000 both entrants passed at A–E grades.

169. In work seen, standards in music in Key Stage 3 are overall average. Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to the basic elements of music, note values and graphic scoring. They enjoy composing and arranging sounds. Pupils in Year 8 discover form in music. Most pupils understand binary and ternary form and are able to listen and analyse a piece of music following a bar chart. Year 9 pupils are comparing twentieth century minimalism to the sounds of Balinese gamelan. Most pupils are able to identify, compare and contrast, instrumentation, texture and rhythms of both styles. In Key Stage 3 overall, the opportunities for practical work are limited because some lessons are short and the two music rooms are too far apart for resources to be shared. Singing is well developed in extra-curricular activities. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils' singing skills to be developed and improved across the key stage.

170. Current standards in Key Stage 4 are overall above average. This is partly due to the grounding received in instrumental lessons, and the department encourages many pupils to choose from the range of instrumental tuition available. Pupils in Year 10 are performing with confidence, and they are gaining experience in working together for ensemble work. Standards are good in Year 10. In one lesson seen pupils put their own ideas into arranging music and sounds for a school seasonal performance. In Year 11 standards are well above average. Pupils are skilled in playing instruments and performing. Their listening and analysis work shows an overall good standard of musicianship. These pupils show a high level of creativity in their compositions. Two pupils are using their compositions from Key Stage 3 and developing them further. For example, one pupil who had recently visited Scotland, decided to illustrate the journey of a river she had seen there. Another pupil was working on recreating her experience of witnessing the Eclipse last year. In the sixth form, there are no pupils taking music in Year 12 at present. In Year 13, the one pupil is working at a high level in performance and in listening and analysis of set works. This pupil's aural skills are overall good.

171. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3, it is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge is secure and classes are always well managed. Expectations of standards of behaviour and work is good. Teacher planning is mostly satisfactory, although the curriculum for all years is less accessible than it should be for pupils with special educational needs because of the emphasis on writing down information and evaluations. Keyboards are not accessible in all lessons because teaching rooms are a distance apart, and

only one of the two teaching rooms is equipped with keyboards. Computers are now in place in the department and there are plans to include them in Key Stage 3 schemes of work. Pupils' learning at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory in all lessons with most pupils completing tasks set, although less satisfactory learning occurs when teachers do not have enough detailed information about the individual needs of some pupils.

172. At Key Stage 4 teaching is good. All teachers show a very good knowledge of their subject and are able to demonstrate skills in well-planned lessons. Performance work is taught successfully, and pupils were observed being coached in solo and ensemble playing. Listening lessons are good, and pupils are given appropriate homework including research exercises. Composition is good overall, and pupils are being encouraged to develop their own individual style. Good use is made of the increased provision of computers in the department. In Key Stage 4, learning is always good with pupils seen making good progress in composing and performing. In the sixth form, the one A-level pupil is making good progress in listening, performing and musicianship in response to very good teaching.

173. Much work has already been done on schemes of work since the last inspection, but progression remains limited through Key Stage 3. There is a need to formulate new development plans for the department which will include tasks to match the needs of all pupils, particularly those of the lower attainers, together with more opportunities for practical work.

174. The new head of department works extremely hard, organising the considerable number of extra-curricular opportunities which are well supported by pupils. All staff are well qualified, give freely of their time and recognise the need for further development. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

175. Standards in physical education are above average overall. Teacher assessments of pupils at age 14 in 2000 indicate that the number achieving expected standards is well above the national average. The GCSE examination has recently been introduced in physical education, and no results are yet available. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the GCSE dance examination was well below the national average, but all pupils who entered the examination gained at least grade G. A-level physical education was taken for the first time in 2000, and the three students who entered the examination achieved results which were well above the national average. A-level in dance was not taken in 2000. The small number of pupils involved in these examinations makes it inappropriate to form comparisons with other subjects.

176. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 is above average, and in the sixth form examination work, attainment is average. This represents a good level of achievement given pupils' prior attainment.

177. By the time they have reached the age of 14, most pupils attain above average standards in games, and some pupils are performing at a higher level. The performance of higher attainers is well illustrated by the Year 8 hockey team, which is currently leading the Liverpool Schools' Hockey League for this age group. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, perform skilfully in hockey and netball, and show sound understanding of the principles of play. They use space well and develop their skills effectively in the context of strategic play. Standards in gymnastics are above average and pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Pupils of all levels of attainment show good control and body tension as they perform individual, partner and group sequences of movement. Particularly good work was seen in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils performed a partner balance sequence with precision and quality of movement. Pupils also demonstrated effective skills of observation, analysis and assessment, as they evaluated each others' work. Most pupils achieve well in swimming with the majority being able to swim 25 metres, demonstrating effective stroke technique. Their achievement in dance is high. Lower attaining pupils show a sound sense of rhythm and timing as they work confidently in the security of a large group, while higher attainers use their knowledge and understanding of dynamics to good effect, when they practised a set dance motif from 'West Side Story.' Most pupils have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and know how to warm up before exercise. Pupils' literacy develops well in almost all lessons, particularly in relation to key words and the technical language of the subject.

178. By the age of 16 improvement in games continues. Pupils who attend extra-curricular clubs make very good progress in their chosen activities reflected in the performance and successes of school teams during the

week of the inspection. Standards of attainment in new activities, such as badminton, are average. Above average standards are attained in GCSE practical coursework. In dance, for example, Year 11 pupils show rhythm and poise as they warm up for their lesson. They effectively choreograph and perform a solo movement motif, using a chair as a stimulus. The pupils show creativity and versatility, together with good dynamic quality and precision of movement. Written coursework indicates that pupils have above average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. This was well illustrated in a theory lesson by pupils' accurate responses to searching questions on the skeletal system.

179. In Years 12 and 13 the high standard of practical work is a feature of both the A/S physical education and the A-level dance courses. Written coursework indicates a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects, such as anatomy and physiology, and contemporary issues in physical education and dance. For example, in a discussion on sport and culture, students showed a sound grasp of the role of sport in society and could recognise the development of sport within different cultures.

180. High standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport and over a third of the school population participates regularly in the extensive programme of clubs, inter-form and inter-school fixtures and competitions. School teams have a very good record of success in competitions at city and district levels. A combined Years 7 and 8 cross-country team has recently qualified for the finals of the English Schools' Cross-Country Championships. Individual pupils gain representative honours at county, regional and occasionally national level. Earlier this year a student from the school represented England as a member of the Under 21 England Hockey Squad.

181. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is good throughout the school. Teaching and learning are very good in the examination classes and dance. Very good relationships between staff and pupils create a co-operative learning environment, and lively, enthusiastic teaching often stimulates learning at a brisk pace. Management of pupils is of a high order and this contributes significantly to the pupils' very good behaviour and obvious enjoyment of the subject. Pupils have very good attitudes to physical education, evident in their smart appearance, high levels of participation in lessons and support of the extra-curricular programme. The teachers know their subject well, reflected in good use of resources and the selection of well-designed tasks, which build on pupils' previous knowledge, and give opportunities for them to improve newly learned skills through practice. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment, and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, and achieve at the same rate as their peers. Teachers make the aims of the lessons clear so that pupils know what is to be done and what is expected of them. Although planning is generally good, it is not always clear how the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment are to be met. On some occasions, high attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged and they do not make the progress in lessons that might be expected. There are good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to make very good progress through the extra-curricular programme.

182. When teaching is most effective, teachers display very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their pupils, who experience a demanding pace of learning and are challenged intellectually and physically. This leads to very good learning, well illustrated in a gymnastics lesson where the teacher's searching questions enabled pupils to identify the criteria with which to evaluate performance. This extended the depth and breadth of their learning. Probing questioning was also used particularly well to promote effective learning in a GCSE theory lesson. Very good learning was evident in a dance lesson, in response to the rigour with which the teacher insisted on high standards of commitment to the warm up exercises. This led to discernible improvement in the pupils' performance. A strong feature of many lessons is the care with which pupils' literacy is developed, and this good practice should be extended to include numeracy and information technology more frequently. The standard of marking of pupils' work is good, with frequent use of full comments that analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the work and offer good advice on how to improve.

183. The leadership and management of physical education are good. There is a clear view of what constitutes a good provision for physical education, and there is an emphasis on high standards in every respect. Teachers of the subject share this view, work well together and form a strong team. They have an enthusiasm and commitment, which makes a significant contribution to the high standards achieved by the pupils. The range of curricular activities has improved throughout the school, and the department has made a good beginning in implementing Curriculum 2000. Extra-curricular sport is a strength of the department and the school.

184. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with the exception of the accommodation, which remains unsatisfactory. The use of dining areas and off-site accommodation for teaching dance and aerobics is unsatisfactory, as is the need to use classrooms as changing rooms. Outdoor provision for games and athletics is poor. Problems arise when large numbers are timetabled for the subject at the same time, and there are insufficient specialist teaching spaces to accommodate them satisfactorily, particularly in bad weather. There are some aspects of management which are areas for development, principally the monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance, building on the work that has just begun. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching requires improvement, in order to share the very good practice which exists and eliminate inconsistencies, such as planning to meet the needs of all pupils.

185. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have improved with exceptionally good results in the first A-level examination. No judgement on teaching was made in the last inspection. Teaching is now good overall, with a high proportion of very good teaching.

SIXTH FORM

186. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully introduced GNVQ and NVQ education courses and integrated Curriculum 2000 within an expanding A-level curriculum through the clear guidance and direction of its Director of Sixth Form Studies. The school has an open policy of enrolment and the prospectus and accompanying documentation detailing a wide range of examination and course requirements is thorough and up-to-date. Attendance figures are very high with an increasing roll of male and female students.

187. Results in the sixth form are close to, but marginally above the national average. In 2000, almost the entire cohort of students entered for A-level achieved grades A to E, with a third achieving A and B grades. Increased numbers in Advanced GNVQ achieved qualifications above those predicted by their GCSE achievement.

188. The sixth form is well managed, and provides a caring environment monitoring pupil progress through its form tutors. Tutors also deliver a programme of guidance, which includes setting targets, applications for higher education, study skills, drugs education, completion of Records of Achievement, revision support and preparation for work experience. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities designed to aid students' personal development, for example, the sixth form council, a forum for pupils' and students' views of the school, and an assisted reading scheme for pupils with special educational needs. All students follow a Key Skills course designed to support numeracy, literacy and information technology needs.

189. Library resources for research require further investment and despite strategies for increasing student numbers, recruitment from science and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory.

190. Sixth form education is financially self-sustaining and cost effective. Since the previous inspection all the issues that were raised have been tackled successfully. The development plan is realistic with achievable goals providing for a positive environment with the capacity to improve further.

VOCATIONAL STUDIES

191. In the sixth form, students can follow intermediate GNVQ courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism together with advanced courses in health and social care, information technology and travel and tourism. Additionally, at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, various business administration courses are provided. In examinations in 2000, in Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils achieving all vocational qualifications taken was well above the national average. In the sixth form, the proportion of students achieving intermediate GNVQs was in line with the national average, and for students taking advanced GNVQs was above the national average. This was broadly the picture in the 1999 examinations.

192. Standards in work seen are above average overall in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and are in line with recent examination results. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of areas being studied and are able to make confident presentations based on research. In a Year 12 intermediate GNVQ health and

safety lesson, students were able to correctly analyse the impact of illnesses such as cancer and heart disease on fictitious clients' lifestyles. Year 12 students following an advanced course in travel and tourism identified appropriate forms of transport for various passenger markets.

193. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in the planning and presentation of activities. Content is interesting and imaginative, often making highly effective use of local industry and the wider community. In a Year 12 advanced health and social care lesson on psychological theories related to child development, the teacher's leadership ensured that students' presentations were related very effectively to their own experiences. Good teaching ensures a good pace to learning with students maintaining interest and concentration throughout lessons. They enjoy the challenges set before them and demonstrate high levels of hard work in assignments, note-taking and research tasks. In all vocational subject areas, the attitudes and behaviour of students are very good. They are courteous and enjoy very good relationships with teachers, their peers and other adults with whom they make contact. Year 13 advanced health and social care students reacted very sensitively and positively when mentally handicapped adults from a local community group gave a presentation to them.

194. The overall leadership and management for all vocational courses are very good. A senior member of staff co-ordinates provision, working well with an enthusiastic and committed team of teachers. A wide range of courses are provided which are flexible enough to cater for students' needs, together with appropriate guidance and support. There is very good documentation and schemes of work. The vocational curriculum is considerably enhanced by extensive links with local industry and the community which, in addition to providing valuable and relevant work placements for students, also provides an extensive range of visits, speakers and up to date teaching material from a large number of industrial and community areas.

195. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Teachers have benefited from locally provided training courses and are now much more confident about encouraging student involvement in lessons; the range of teaching and learning styles has therefore expanded and is more appropriate for vocational courses. This is still an area for further development. Additionally, the completion rates for students taking vocational courses have improved.